

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945: A Study of a Trying Relationship

Matthew Fallon Hinds

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis offers a fresh interpretation of Anglo-American relations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the period 1941 to 1945. Historians of Anglo-American relations have characterized the bilateral relationship as one of rivalry and polarization. While examples of underlying national competition can be identified wherever the wartime alliance operated, whether on the battlefield or at the conference table, the commonalities which united the allies should, however, be given equal weight. My thesis departs from the traditional historiographical perspective, arguing that when closely examined, the allies were very aware of the strategic reciprocal benefits that would emanate from integrating their policies in Saudi Arabia. First and foremost, Britain and the United States' relations in Saudi Arabia were shaped by the fact that the two countries were allies working side by side in the global struggle that was the Second World War. In this wartime context, the strategic influence of Saudi Arabia has tended to be overlooked. The Kingdom's influence resided in its geographic location, its religious centrality within Islam, and most importantly, its rare political status as a sovereign Arab state. These attributes served as a unifying force for British and American wartime interests, encouraging the two allies to strive for an Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia that was built on the concept of strategic interdependence. While collaboration between Britain and the United States ebbed and flowed, it is a testament to their continued pursuit of cooperation that the activities of the wartime alliance in Saudi Arabia between 1941 and 1945 were envisaged by policymakers as a template for achieving greater Anglo-American accord throughout the Middle East during and beyond the Second World War.

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Abbreviations

AIR	Air Ministry
AAA	American Agricultural Mission
AACFC	American Air Corps Ferry Command
ABC	American British Staff Conference
AAWPG	Anglo-American War Planning Group
AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
AUML	Arkansas University Mullins Library
BPC	Bahrain Petroleum Company
BDFA	British Documents on Foreign Affairs
BL	British Library
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CAB	War Cabinet Records
CW	Cable & Wireless Limited
CASOC	California - Arabian Standard Oil Company
CO	Colonial Office
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CIPP	Committee on International Petroleum Policy
EOC	Enemy Oil Committee
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
FDRPL	Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library
HAN	Hansards
HMG	His Majesty's Government
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
IPAA	Independent Petroleum Association of America
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IOR	Indian Office Records

IPC	Iraqi Petroleum Company
LL	Lauinger Library
LC	Library of Congress
MESC	Middle East Supply Centre
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NEA	Division of Near Eastern Affairs
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PAN-AM	Pan American Airlines
PAW	Petroleum Administration of War
PRC	Petroleum Reserves Corporation
PREM	Prime Minister Office Records
PRO	Public Records Office
RG	Record Group
SAMEC	St. Antony's Middle East Centre
SA	Saudi Arabia
SAMS	Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate
SWNCC	State, War, Navy Coordinating Committee
SML	Seeley Mudd Library
SOE	Special Operations Executive
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
TAPLINE	Trans-Arabian Pipeline
TWA	Trans World Airlines
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USAFIME	United States of America Forces in the Middle East
WO	War Office

Introduction

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia 1941-1945: A Study of a Trying Relationship

With “the stake [having] become world domination”, Britain and the United States were before all else allies fighting against a common enemy in the Second World War.¹ Bound by a kindred history, Anglo-Saxon culture and comparable liberal institutions of government, the two nations shared complementary national and security interests. Given the fundamentally cooperative nature of the bilateral relationship, it is paradoxical that out of all the motifs selected by historians, it is depictions of national rivalry and competition that tend to dominate scholarly interpretations of the “Special Relationship”. This dichotomy is apparent when viewing the Anglo-American experience in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between the years of 1941 and 1945.

In Saudi Arabia, as in so many other parts of the world, efforts to strengthen the Allied position *vis-a-vis* the Axis powers had led the United States and Britain to be - in the words of Winston Churchill - “mixed-up together”.² Although distant from the famous battlefields of the Pacific and Europe, Saudi Arabia throughout the Second World War was considered to be strategically important, making it a priority for the allies to be on friendly terms with the country’s charismatic king, Ibn Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. His Kingdom’s significance owed to its geographical location, centrality within Islam, and its regional political influence. The latter was firmly rooted in Saudi Arabia’s sovereign status, which constituted a political rarity in the Arab world. However, Saudi Arabia at the start of the war found itself in a perilous economic state, as wartime conditions had crippled the Kingdom’s main source of income, funds accrued from the annual Hajj. Unless the wartime alliance acted to address this problem, the stability of the Kingdom as well as the strategic interests of the allies that were tied to it would be in jeopardy.

Britain and the United States had independently maintained their own bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia that were markedly different in emphasis and scale. London’s relationship

¹ Henri Michel, *The Second World War* (Britain: Andre Deutsch, 1975) p. 842.

² David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Cooperation* (London: Europa, 1981) p. 169.

with the Kingdom had from the beginning been built on strong, political, strategic and economic foundations reaching back to the re-emergence of the Al-Saud dynasty in 1901.³ In the years that followed, Britain enjoyed the advantage of being the predominant foreign power in the Arabian Peninsula, a state of affairs which caused the Anglo-Saudi relationship to be oscillating between the amicable and the contentious.⁴ By the time of the 1927 Treaty of Jeddah, Britain's recognition of the "complete and absolute independence" of Saudi Arabia had guaranteed the future security of the new state's defence under British aegis.⁵ While Saudi Arabia was at no time officially part of the British Empire, London's commitment to the Kingdom sprang from the desire to promote regional stability, which in essence meant protecting British suzerainty in the Middle East.

Independently of Britain, the United States Government's relations with Saudi Arabia were far less comprehensive, but were nonetheless potentially more momentous. American influence mainly came by way of the privately owned Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), which had since 1931 held a 360,000 square mile concession in Saudi Arabia.⁶ The United States was the world's leading oil producer at that time. However, Saudi Arabian oil would not be discovered until 1938, and it would take eight more years before it came to be exported commercially. As American domestic oil reserves were rapidly being channelled towards the Allied war effort in the Second World War, policymakers in Washington increasingly cast their eye on the Kingdom's oil potential, seeing it as extra foreign reserves for American post-war national security.⁷

Based on the distinct American and British spheres of interest in place in Saudi Arabia, leading officials on both sides of the Atlantic faced the challenge of how best to coordinate their country's respective policies. The pre-existing fault-lines can be observed in the American

³ Philip Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East: 1919-1945* (United States: University of Pennsylvania 1978) p. 223.

⁴ For the best work covering this period of Anglo-Saudi relations, see Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa'ud* (London: Frank Cass, 1976) pp. 13-23. Also see, Jacob Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saud Arabia: the Formative Years, 1902-1918* (United States: Harvard University Press, 1987). For material on Anglo-Saudi relations after the First World War, see Haifa Alangari, *The Struggle for Power in Arabia: Ibn Saud, Hussein and Great Britain, 1914-1924* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1998).

⁵ At the time of the treaty's signing, Saudi Arabia was officially referred to as the Kingdom of the Nejd and Hedjaz and its Dependencies. See Daniel Silverfarb, "The Treaty of Jeddah of May 1927" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (July, 1982).

⁶ Robert Bruce, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

⁷ In 1938, the United States produced 60% of world crude oil Irvine Anderson, *Aramco, the United States and Saudi Arabia: A Study of the Dynamics of Foreign Oil Policy 1933-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) p. 37.

Secretary of War, Henry Stimson's May 1944 reaction to the inter-allied suspicions that permeated discussions regarding the establishment of a joint Anglo-American military mission charged with training Saudi Arabian military forces. Capturing the larger complexity of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, Stimson stated: "The United States has considerable interest in a *sovereign* nation [Saudi Arabia] which is also of undeniable importance to the British Empire".⁸

Stimson's assessment points towards the leitmotif of this thesis. When analysing Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia between 1941 and 1945, it is important to resist viewing the relationship as a clear-cut case of either competition or cooperation. Paving the way for a more reflective starting-point, the initial priority of this thesis is to uncover how, why and to what extent Britain and the United States became mutually involved in a place that - in the words of one American official at the time - was "probably the largest little-known unit area in the habitable world".⁹ Furthermore, an important ancillary element relates to considering the strategies and politics of the wider wartime alliance and how they factored into the relations between the two allies in Saudi Arabia. Only when acknowledging such wider questions and taking a broader perspective, can one adequately assess if Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia amounted to a "Special Relationship", or whether the Kingdom was in fact a hotbed for rivalry and competition.

This thesis will begin with a chapter framing the respective engagements of Britain and the United States in Saudi Arabia preceding the Second World War. The historical context of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia will be examined with an eye to how the sovereign Arab kingdom was linked to British and American foreign policies and by extension with Allied strategy. The chapters that follow the prologue are set up chronologically and pursue the theme of the complexion and extent of Anglo-American cooperation between 1941 and 1945.

Looking at the 1941-1942 period, examples of close Anglo-American collaboration are as numerous as they are profound, paving the way for a bilateral alliance that would be comprehensive in its scope and character in the years to come. Chapter II examines the genesis of that relationship beginning in 1941. Faced with the threat of the Axis advancing in the Middle

⁸ United States National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (NARA): Records of Department of State. Record Group (RG) 218/190/1/11/6 Box 148. Stimson to Hull, May 1, 1944.

⁹ K.S. Twitchell, 'Water Resources of Saudi Arabia' *Geographical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jul., 1944), p. 365.

East, an *ad-hoc* Anglo-American alliance quickly emerged in Saudi Arabia. A dedicated group of Anglo-American officials based in London, Washington, and Jeddah pressed for action to help the financially burdened Saudi Arabian government remain stable, a strategic wartime goal. To circumvent the United States' neutrality laws, the two Atlantic powers came to an agreement in which London would directly subsidize the Saudi Arabian Government, while Washington quietly sent an agricultural mission to the drought-ridden Kingdom.

Chapter III and IV develop the theme of Anglo-American collaboration, examining it in its early incarnations. Chapter III looks at the circumstances which rendered Saudi Arabia an integral part of the wider Anglo-American wartime strategy in the Middle East. This includes the Allies' successful acquisition of air and landing rights and the ambiguity that lay beneath protracted attempt of Britain and the United States to guard Saudi Arabia's oilfields in 1942. Chapter IV examines the Anglo-American-backed Hoskins Mission, which explored the possibility of turning Ibn Saud into an Arab arbiter in Palestine in 1943. In many respects, the Hoskins Mission has been a forgotten piece of history, certainly discounted when it comes to the historiography of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. However, the Hoskins Mission illustrates the extent in which the subject extends beyond the limits of the Arabian Peninsula. As will be shown, the previously mentioned episodes - regardless of their respective outcomes - were links in a chain of events that set into motion a concerted attempt by the allies to expand Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter V, VI, and VII deal with the latter period of the Second World War from 1943 to 1945, when British and American officials were formulating how to best define and implement a form of Anglo-American collaboration that would work effectively in the interest of both parties. Chapter V starts by examining the United States' growing preoccupation with oil in Saudi Arabia and the founding of the Petroleum Reserves Corporation and the ramifications that this had on Anglo-American solidarity. Although concerns over oil naturally raised tension between the allies, this chapter also reveals another - and often overlooked - perspective. The British and American governments both displayed political willingness to seek out ways to assuage bilateral animosities over oil, culminating in the signing of the Anglo-American Oil Agreement in August 1944.

Rather than oil, the issues that sparked greater inter-allied discord, which will also be elaborated upon in Chapter IV, were debates over how best to reform the Saudi Arabian

Government's poor fiscal management and limit the scale of Anglo-American subsidies. These concerns were a running theme of Anglo-American relations because they dealt with the long-term objectives of both countries as well as the long-term aim of preserving Saudi Arabia's sovereignty. In the latter phases of the war, a *modus vivendi* was reached with regard to fiscal issues allowing for more immediate concerns to take precedence. The Stettinius Mission, held in London April 1944, brought British and American policymakers together to ensure that Allied policies were in concurrence, especially with regard to the Middle East. Shortly afterwards there were calls on both sides of the Atlantic to remove the British and American ministers from their posts in Saudi Arabia because of their "lack of liaison". Subsequently, fresh efforts were made to improve Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia as the State Department and Foreign Office instructed their respective ministers in Jeddah to work in closer harmony.

The important role played by the interaction of personnel representing Britain and the United States respectively is further explored in Chapter VI. The arrival of the new American minister William Eddy in the autumn of 1944 was interpreted by British authorities as a signal that the United States sought to expand its presence in Saudi Arabia. Over the next year, this resulted in a series of policy debates between the two allies about the level with which they would be willing to continue to cooperate. Sometimes the advantages and pitfalls of collaboration during this period were difficult to discern. Subjects that will be examined in this chapter include the shared responsibility for subsidizing the Saudi Arabian government, the joint Anglo-American military mission, issues concerning aviation and telecommunications and the construction of the Dhahran airfield.

Chapter VII, the final chapter, goes on to describe the post-war dynamics that were already beginning to have a profound effect on Anglo-American relations by 1945. When the towering figures of the wartime alliance, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, individually met with Ibn Saud in February 1945, the occasion has been considered a watershed historical moment dramatizing American ascendancy and British decline. These conclusions need to be reappraised. American domination in Saudi Arabia was by no means assured at this stage. British political influence in the Kingdom was still very much a reality, and thus both countries' relationship remained strategically relevant. From London's perspective, the United States was gaining an established foothold in Saudi Arabia that was extensively linked with Britain's own concerns about a post war Soviet Union getting further involved in the Middle East. The

American presence served to furnish British regional interests with an extra layer of security. This policy was made clear with the early formulation of Britain's "Northern Tier" policy of the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁰ Conversely, although American policy was less concerned with countering Soviet designs, Washington recognized that Saudi Arabia and the Middle East could be a post-war hot zone, an area where British agency and its military installations would be a critical commodity.

This thesis examines the diplomatic interaction between Britain and the United States within Saudi Arabia as it played out against the global backdrop of the Second World War. In understanding the multi-faceted relationship between the Americans and the British in Saudi Arabia, this thesis primarily views its subject matter from a traditionalist perspective of history. As such, it emphasizes national interest, security and influence, but also considers more subtle elements outside of the purview of power politics, such as culture and ideology. Recognizing the contributions made by the upper echelons of British and American officialdom in shaping policy, this thesis will also explore the role played by individuals who were not in the upper tier of government, but rather were the "boots on the ground", putting policies into action.

The methodology applied in the thesis is that of an historical narrative, which offers the best means to explain and analyze the complexities of the subject matter. The research on which the thesis is based has been drawn from a variety of different archives. In the United States, these include the National Archives in College Park, the Library of Congress, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library and the libraries at Princeton University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, Virginia University, and Arkansas University. In Britain, the bulk of the research was undertaken at the National Archives in Kew, but also at the British Library, and the libraries at the London School of Economics and the Middle East Centre at St. Antony's College in Oxford. From these repositories that hold private papers, reference has further been made to an assortment of published primary resources, which include, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *Documents on British Overseas Policy*, *Documents on British Foreign Affairs*, *Hansard's*, *The Aramco Handbook* and *Foreign Office Lists*. Finally, a number

¹⁰ See, Behcet Kemal Yesilburba, *The Baghdad Pact: Anglo-American Defence Policies in the Middle East, 1950-1959* (Oxford: Frank Cass) 2005.

of private papers and memoir-related sources from key British, American and Saudi Arabian officials have been consulted to bring further insight to the study.¹¹

Historiographical Review

There is no single book-length study directly focusing on Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War. The research undertaken here draws on a wide selection of secondary sources that fall under the historiography of Anglo-American relations. It also takes into account material from other fields, such as studies on petroleum, the Cold War, and national histories of Britain, the United States and Saudi Arabia. The common denominator of these diverse works is that when they touch upon Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, the gist of their arguments fall within the established parameters of the literature.¹²

While a comprehensive historiographical review is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that AJP Taylor's comment that sound scholarship is based on "the ruthless dispelling of myths".¹³ Therefore, it is necessary for this study to first make sense of the mythology surrounding the Anglo-American alliance.¹⁴ The Allied victory in the Second World War brought forth a collective historical memory - one in which the United States and Britain were as one in all. In 1942, it was Winston Churchill who coined the phrase "Special Relationship", and in later years, his six-volume *History of the Second World War* helped carve

¹¹ An assortment of private papers has been reviewed for this study. From the British Library, London - Gilbert Laithwaite Papers. From the Middle East Centre, Oxford- the Laurence Grafftey Smith Papers, the Andrew Ryan Papers, the Reader Bullard Papers, the George Rendell Papers, the Miles Lampson Papers and the Gerald de Gaury Papers. From National Archives, College Park- the Harley Notter Papers. From Hyde Park- Roosevelt Correspondence with Saudi Arabia, Officials, Etc, the Robert Sherwood Papers, the Harry Hopkins Papers, the Henry Stimson Papers (microfiche) the William Rigdon Papers, the Samuel Rosenman Papers, the Anna Roosevelt Boettinger Papers and the John Winant Papers. From Princeton Seeley Mudd Library- William Eddy Papers and the Karl Twitchell Papers. From Georgetown University- the Clarence McIntosh Papers, Tim Mulligan Papers. From the University of Arkansas – the James Moose Papers. From the Library of Congress, Washington DC- the Diaries of Harold Ickes, the Hebert Feis Papers, the Loy Henderson Papers, the Archibald Roosevelt Papers. From the University of Virginia- the Rive Childs Papers and the Edward Stettinius Papers.

¹² For historiographical sketches on Anglo-American relations, see David Reynolds, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations' *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, Vol. 65, 1 (Winter, 1989) pp. 89-111. John Baylis, *Anglo-American Relations since 1939: An Enduring Alliance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) pp. 8-16. Alex Danchev 'On Specialness', *Royal Institute of International Affairs*. Vol. 72, No. 4 (October, 1996) pp. 737-750.

¹³ Writing a review for the *Observer*, A.J.P. Taylor extolled Richard Overy's *The Air War 1939-1945*, saying "as so often with sound scholarship, is the ruthless dispelling of myths."

¹⁴ For essential surveys on Anglo-American diplomatic relations, see David Reynolds, 'A 'Special Relationship'? America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War', Vol. 62, 1 (Winter, 1986) pp. 1-20. Wm. Roger Louis & Hedley Bull (eds.) *The 'Special Relationship'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

into the public consciousness the idea that the two countries shared common values and a familial affinity for one another.¹⁵ As one modern day historian of the wartime alliance facetiously once noted: “In the beginning was the word, and the word was Churchill’s and he pronounced it good”.¹⁶

Given the sacrosanct aspects of the “Special Relationship”, it is no wonder that those historians who have expounded the Churchillian attitude have been categorized as “Evangelicals”.¹⁷ H.C. Allen’s 1954 *Great Britain and the United States* may be the most extreme example of this approach to Anglo-American relations. In the preface of his book, Allen had little trouble conceding: “I have not written this book purely as an academic study: I have written it because I believe in the necessity for cordial Anglo-American relations”.¹⁸ Such accounts in the evangelical mode thus contained an underlying political agenda, which in the above context meant trying to arrest Britain’s decline on the international stage.¹⁹

Out of the post-Suez era arose a new generation of historians ready to tear apart the folklore that had been an indelible aspect of the “Special Relationship”. Previously classified information from the Second World War had by the early 1970s become available, uncovering a reality that was far more problematic, showing little resemblance to earlier rose-tinted interpretations.²⁰ Given access to these documents, scholars accentuated the role of self-interest

¹⁵ For an account of Churchill as historian and his role in establishing a collective memory of the Second World War, see David Reynolds *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (United States: Random House, 2005).

¹⁶ John Charmley, *Churchill’s Grand Alliance* (United States: Harcourt Brace, 1996) p. 3.

¹⁷ H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1955). Other works with an Evangelical bent include, H.C. Allen, *The Anglo-American Predicament* (London: Macmillan, 1960). H.C. Allen and Roger Thompson (eds.), *Contrast and Connection: Bicentennial Essays in Anglo-American History* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976) Joseph E. Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill: The Partnership that Saved the West* (New York, 1980).

¹⁸ Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, preface.

¹⁹ For an example of historians seeking to play an active role bringing about Anglo-American accord, see David Cannadine ‘Historians as Diplomats? Roger B. Merriman and George M. Trevelyan and Anglo-American Relations’ *New England Quarterly* (1999) pp. 207-231. To a lesser extent, American historians also partook in this vigorous form history writing when assessing the Anglo-American relationship, particularly during the politically charged era of the Cold War. For example, the collection of histories related to the Second World War written by Herbert Feis, go out of their way to praise the solidarity of the wartime alliance, while diminishing the contributions of the Soviet Union, see Herbert Feis, *Roosevelt, Churchill & Stalin* (United States: Princeton University Press, 1957). H. Feis, *From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War 1945-1950* (United States: Norton Press, 1970). For more recent examples of a politically conscious Evangelical outlook, particular in the era of the “War on Terror”, see William Shawcross, *Allies: The U.S., Britain and Europe in the Aftermath of the Iraq War* (United States: Public Affairs, 2005).

²⁰ Ambivalence towards Anglo-American relations arguably reached its highest point during the presidency and premiership of Richard Nixon and Edward Heath; the same moment when documents from the Second World War were being officially released. It is very easy to speculate that the lukewarm attitude towards the Anglo-American

in developing their analysis. The historiography soon became more sophisticated with the work of historians like David Reynolds's *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, which introduced the concept of "competitive-cooperation" to explain the "undercurrent of transatlantic rivalry".²¹ Also included in this class of scholarship is Christopher Thorne's *Allies of a Kind* in which he puts forward a hard-hitting account of how British and American interests greatly diverged in the Pacific. Thorne's study debunked what he labels the "realms of mythology" celebrating Anglo-American harmony.²²

Taking the combative angle to its outer edges, there is John Charmley's polemical *Churchill's Grand Alliance*. Charmley makes the bold charge that Britain's advocacy for the 'Special Relationship' was like another "Dardanelles", a poorly conceived strategy laid out by Churchill that unwittingly ended up damaging British power.²³ This is not to say that interpretations as extreme as Charmley's have dominated the scholarly debate. There are a number of recent texts that equally highlight the unifying traits of the wartime alliance. An excellent example of this is Warren Kimball's *Forged in War*. The author makes a convincing case that: "Whatever Anglo-American quarrels persisted...the British and Americans maintained a remarkably close, relatively candid, and extraordinarily cooperative relationship throughout the war".²⁴

Despite the absence of a specialized in-depth study, scholars of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia have tended to see the subject as a microcosm of the wartime alliance during the Second World War. David Reynolds, for example, has applied his idea of "competitive-cooperation" to argue that the two allies worked together most effectively in Saudi Arabia when the Axis powers were at their most threatening. Once this danger receded, holds Reynolds, the "latent competition between the two powers came to the surface once more".²⁵ Even though the

relationship in the early 1970's may have influenced those contemporary historians who were interpreting the wartime alliance of the 1940's.

²¹ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo American Alliance*, p. 2.

²² Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, (Britain: Oxford University Press, 1978) p.775.

²³ Charmley, *Grand Alliance*, pp. 3-10 & pp.356-360.

²⁴ Warren F. Kimball, *Forged In War: Roosevelt, Churchill and the Second World War* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997) pp. 33. For similar works that stress the cooperative bonds of Britain and the United States, see Henry Butterfield Ryan, *The Vision of Anglo-America: The US-UK Alliance and the Emerging Cold War, 1943-1946* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1987)pp. 14-38. James Holland, *Together We Stand: American, Britain and the Forging of an Alliance* (United States: Miramax, 2006). Lynne Olson, *Citizens of London: The Americans who Stood with Britain in its Darkest, Finest Hour* (United States: Random House, 2010) pp. 3-26. David Stafford, *Roosevelt & Churchill: Men of Secrets* (United States: Overlook, 2000).

²⁵ Reynolds, *Alliance*, p. 210.

focus of his work is not on the wartime alliance in Saudi Arabia, Reynolds, however, misses a crucial point. The fact is that as the Axis threat waned between 1943 and 1945, this same period saw Britain and the United States at their most determined in their diplomatic efforts to cooperate in Saudi Arabia.

Focusing on Britain's strategic interests in Saudi Arabia, John Charmley once more applies his own theme of Churchill's Faustian bargain, warning that "co-operation with a much stronger and richer power (the United States) was an enterprise not to be hazarded lightly".²⁶ The hegemonic transition of power to which Charmley refers is also studied by Wm. Roger Louis who gives considerable analysis of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia in *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951*. According to Louis, London's disenchantment stemmed from what was perceived as a form of American economic and cultural imperialism taking root in Saudi Arabia, which one day might threaten Britain's position in the Middle East.²⁷ If there was ever a prime instance illustrating the mutual wartime distrust and apprehension between the two allies, concludes Louis, "the case of Saudi Arabia might serve as an example".²⁸ One common denominator between this thesis and the work of Louis is his view that in order to understand both British and American perspectives of Saudi Arabia, one must take into account the strategic importance of the Kingdom and its capacity to influence regional politics. Looking at the views of Charmley and Louis, it is curious that both pay little attention to the strategic pragmatism underlying the shared British and American presence in Saudi Arabia.

Nonetheless, the notion of *Pax Britannica's* slow recession and the advent of *Pax Americana* remains a fixture in the subject's historiography. A more recent work, W. Taylor Fain's *American Ascendancy and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* also builds on this theme, but pursues it to its most draconian and illogical conclusion. It is not only that in Fain's view British officialdom viewed the United States with "trepidation". He takes it one step further and provocatively claims: "The most important conflict in the Persian Gulf Region during the early 1940s had not been between the Allied and Axis powers, but rather between Britain and the United States for political dominance in Saudi Arabia".²⁹ By comparing the magnitude of Anglo-

²⁶ Charmley, *Grand Alliance*, p. 93.

²⁷ Louis, *The British Empire*, p.180 & pp.173-204.

²⁸ W. Roger Louis, *The British Empire In the Middle East 1945- 1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Britain: Oxford University Press 1984) p. 14.

²⁹ W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendancy and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* (Britain: Macmillan, 2008) p. 22.

American rivalry in Saudi Arabia with the enmity that existed between the Allies and the Axis respectively, Fain's line of thinking loses all sense of historical proportion.

From an American-centric perspective, Philip Baram's *The Department of State in the Middle East: 1919-1945* gives a more nuanced analysis and shows Saudi Arabia to have been an anomaly. Anglo-American relations in the Kingdom amounted to more than the British being pushed aside by a more powerful "youthful American interloper". Baram argues that some members of the State Department saw it to be the other way around. They viewed their British colleagues as conniving to undermine the United States' political position in Saudi Arabia.³⁰ Although Baram attests to the long-standing Anglo-Saudi relationship, he fails to appreciate the fact that American diplomacy at the time took many of its cues from years of British statecraft and experience in the region. *Britain & Saudi Arabia 1925-1939* by Clive Leatherdale is the most complete work detailing the history while also offering an appraisal of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War. Leatherdale describes it in dramatic fashion as a "struggle for supremacy" without, however, making any note of the multiple policy agreements struck between the allies in an effort to boost bilateral collaboration.³¹

Barry Rubin's article 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945' treats the subject far more directly than most sources, but without emphasising the antagonistic element. The element of rivalry surrounding the wartime alliance, asserts Rubin, comprised "a certain amount of farce". According to Rubin, the British, in their desire to retain close relations with Washington, were generally unwilling to participate in the contest. Rubin separates himself from the rest of the historiography by placing greater emphasis on the role of Saudi Arabian officials, who he argues planted the seeds of Anglo-American discord.³² He illustrates episodes in which Saudi Arabian officials were able to stoke British and American tensions by adeptly playing the two powers against each other. This was a particularly important point when it came to negotiating Anglo-American subsidies for the Kingdom in the spring of 1944. Nonetheless, Rubin's approach neglects the far greater role that the Kingdom's geopolitical significance had in shaping the Anglo-American relationship.

³⁰ Baram, *The Department of State*, p. 223.

³¹ Leatherdale, *Britain & Saudi Arabia 1925-1939: The Imperial Oasis* (Britain: Frank Cass, 1983) p. 341.

³² Barry Rubin, 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (April, 1979) pp. 253-267. Also for further context, see Rubin, *The Great Powers in the Middle East* (United Kingdom: Frank Cass, 1980) pp. 34-73.

The scholar who has most recently dealt with the topic directly is Simon Davis. Describing the relationship as a “Darwinistic paradigm”, his article ‘Keeping the Americans in Line: Britain, the United States and Saudi Arabia, 1939-1945’ and his recent study *Contested Space: Anglo-American Relations in the Persian Gulf, 1939-1947* places Davis firmly at the extreme end of those works that accentuate the confrontational component of Anglo-American relations.³³ In the chapters referring to Saudi Arabia in *Contested Space*, Davis’ work is principally concerned with economic factors. The thrust of his argument is that in ideological terms a larger socioeconomic battle was taking place in Saudi Arabia, pitting “neo-corporatist British guided development” against “American New Deal internationalism”.³⁴ According to Davis, American authorities were “intolerant of any vestigial British primacy” and considered it to be on par with “totalitarianism” and “indigenous revolution”.³⁵ But to make such an uneasy comparison, Davis overstates his case and exaggerates the reach of American power while completely ignoring the interdependent aspects of Anglo-American relations in the Kingdom. Although the subject matter of this thesis and the work by Davis respectively cover similar historical terrain, the arguments put forward are poles apart.

Due to the relatively diverse nature of the historiography, a group of works fall outside the traditional Anglo-American framework, while still contributing in significant ways to the literature. Two recent histories of Saudi-American relations, Thomas Lippman’s *Inside the Mirage* and Rachel Bronson’s *Thicker than Oil* both include sections dedicated to the Second World War period.³⁶ However, they make no mention of the fact that the British legation in Jeddah served as the vital interlocutor for the United States. Especially in the early war years between 1941 and 1943, the British connection gave American officials new points of access to Ibn Saud and his inner-circle of advisors. By not giving the British role its due respect, a major historical dimension is missing from these two studies. As national histories go, Alexei Vassiliev’s *The History of Saudi Arabia* contains an entire chapter detailing the Kingdom’s

³³ Simon Davis, ‘Keeping the Americans in Line?’ Britain, the United States and Saudi Arabia- 1939 – 45’ *Statecraft and Diplomacy*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (March, 1997).

³⁴ Simon Davis, *Contested Space: Anglo-American Relations in the Persian Gulf, 1939-1947* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2009).

³⁵ Davis, *Contested Space*, p.14.

³⁶ Thomas Lippman, *Inside the Mirage: America’s Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (United States: Westview Press, 2004) pp.25-38 & Rachel Bronson, *Thicker than Oil: America’s Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 35-45.

interaction with British and American officialdom during the Second War, but it offers no final comment on the state of Anglo-American relations.³⁷

Although Donald Cameron Watt's 1963 article 'The Foreign Policy of Ibn Saud 1936-1939' is not focused on Anglo-American relations, it is still vitally important for this thesis.³⁸ It lifts Saudi Arabia out of the shadows and puts the country's wider strategic influence in the spotlight on the eve of the Second World War. Watt asserts that in his dealing with Britain, Italy and Germany in the late 1930s, Ibn Saud carefully manipulated western powers for his own advantage. Historians have subsequently used this characterization and applied it to their arguments about the wartime behaviour of Ibn Saud, believing that he handled the Americans and the British in the same way, fomenting inter-allied rivalry for his own ends.³⁹

David Howarth's biography of Ibn Saud, *The Desert King* offers an interpretation of the wartime alliance in Saudi Arabia that leads us to a polarizing theme within the subject's historiography, one that sees the diplomatic cultures of Britain and the United States as being distinctly at odds with one another. In the chapter entitled *Money and Dishonour*, Howarth contends that because of America's growing influence, Saudi Arabia was on the verge of "both spiritual and material" chaos by the end of the Second World War.⁴⁰ The British writer, Robert Lacey, a man who likens the traditional Bedouin raid to be a "cross between Arthurian chivalry and County Cricket," also goes to some lengths to suggest that British influence in Saudi Arabia was somehow of nobler sentiment. In his book *The Kingdom*, Lacey wonders if the Saudi Arabia that had once persevered through penurious conditions, helped along by the careful assistance of Britain, would be able to survive the new prosperity courtesy of the free spending Americans.⁴¹

The idea that the growing influence of the United States during the Second World War was morally inferior to that of Britain can be read between the lines of the record left by British "men on the spot" who were intimately involved with the every-day running of *Pax Britannica* in the Middle East.⁴² These works show little sign of Churchill's "evangelism" towards Anglo-

³⁷ Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (New York: New York University Press, 2000) pp. 321-327

³⁸ Donald Cameron Watt, 'The Foreign Policy of Ibn Saud 1936-1939' *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 1, II (April, 1963).

³⁹ For the best example of this phenomenon, see Barry Rubin, *The Great Powers*, pp. 34-73.

⁴⁰ D. Howarth, *The Desert King: A Life of Ibn Saud* (Beirut: Continental, 1965) p. 210.

⁴¹ Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Saud* (Britain: Hutchison, 1981) p. 27.

⁴² There are a group of British memoirs useful to this study. For a view on Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, see Laurence Grafftey-Smith's *Bright Levant* (Britain: John Murray, 1970) p. 258. For a British regional perspective, see Richard Casey, *Personal Experience-1941-1946* (New York: David McKay, 1963) p. 30. Maurice Peterson, *Both Sides of the Curtain* (London: Constable, 1950) p. 238. Focusing on Saudi Arabia on the edge of the

American relations. They are more nostalgic for, and saddened by Britain's lost place in the world. John "Pasha" Glubb's *Britain and the Arabs* is a prime example of this motif. In the chapter entitled "The Tragedy of Arabia", he claims that Saudi Arabia's "own peculiarly Arab culture was suddenly swept away by the flood of mechanized materialism" that came courtesy of the Americans.⁴³ Harry St. John Bridger Philby's *Arabian Jubilee* is another example of this view, but lays the change at Saudi Arabia's door. While critical towards the dangers caused by American materialism, Philby is more philosophical, insisting that British and American officials shared a common challenge, that of trying to balance traditional Arab life with Western modernity.⁴⁴

The most influential source amongst those American officials who wrote about Saudi Arabia is Colonel William Eddy's 1953 monograph *When FDR met Ibn Saud*.⁴⁵ Serving as the American minister to Saudi Arabia from 1944-1946, Eddy's monograph is less of a historical work and more of a recollection of his duties as a translator during the meeting between Roosevelt and Ibn Saud of February 1945. It also contains some choice words for what he perceives as official British meddling when it came to the meeting.⁴⁶ While extolling America's enlightened view of Saudi Arabia, Eddy's suggestion that Britain had imperial aims to subvert Saudi Arabia sovereignty lacks veracity since the Kingdom's independence was a critical part of London's Middle East policy.

Eddy's protégé, Parker Hart, the American pro-Consul from 1943-1945 and later Washington's ambassador to Saudi Arabia between 1961 and 1965, is another example of an American official who writes critically about his British colleagues. In his book, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, the first chapter is dedicated to the war years and is entitled, 'Troubled US-British Cooperation'. Writing more than 50 years after the actual events, Hart opens the chapter with the following observation:

Second World War, see Andrew Ryan, *The Last of the Dragomans* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1951). Reader Bullard, E.C. Hodgkin (ed.) *Two Kings in Arabia: Letters from Jeddah 1923-1925 and 1936-1939* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1993).

⁴³ John Glubb, *Britain and the Arabs: Study of Fifty Years, 1908-1958* (London: Hodder Stoughton, 1958) p. 355.

⁴⁴ St. John Philby, *Arabia Jubilee* (Britain, 1952) p. 236; Also see Philby, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (London: Robert Hale, 1957) Both are invaluable sources impressing upon the cultural effects that Britain and the United States had on Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁵ William Eddy, *When FDR Met Ibn Saud* (New York: American Friends of the Middle East, 1953) p.43.

⁴⁶ Eddy's work made such an impression that, David Howarth - writing more than ten years after it was published - commented that Eddy wrote "sourly of the British with less reason than many of their critics." Howarth, *Desert King*, page 207 * Colonel Eddy's wife accused Howarth of calling her husband a liar. Seeley Mudd Library: William Eddy Papers. Box 8, 'Howarth's Book' March 5, 1965.

“Three years into World War II, the government of Winston Churchill in war-battered London might have been expected to welcome an economic as well as a military partner such as the United States in the Middle East, especially one with so little political ambition or concern in the area. Such was not the case”.⁴⁷

Hart’s thesis of British perfidy and American innocence is questionable and to some degree biased. One of Britain’s prime motives *was* in fact to work with the United States as an economic and military partner in order to ensure regional stability. Furthermore, it would be naive to think that the United States - on the way to becoming a global power - did not have political motives in Saudi Arabia.

Examples of the memoir literature as outlined above hold importance in that they help to showcase the evolution of the subject’s historiography.⁴⁸ A common theme shared by the texts is their varying degrees of national chauvinism and the stress they placed on the differences in style that characterised British and American diplomatic cultures. To say that British authorities in Saudi Arabia were cynical and conservative while their American counterparts were naive and lacking in subtlety is a misguided assessment as will be explored in this thesis. Although the memoir literature on the whole lacks depth, the high profile of the authors associated with it has allowed these works to achieve a definitive status. It is clear that the authors of these works have allowed themselves to be influenced by their sense of nationalism, and this has contributed to the divisive depiction of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during this period.

Finally, the subject of Saudi Arabian oil has tended to be dealt with in isolation rather than from within the broader framework of Anglo-American relations. While this thesis is not an examination of British and American oil policies in Saudi Arabia, it will draw on relevant studies that deal directly with the connection between oil and wartime strategy and national security.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Parker Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States-Birth of a Security Partnership* (United States: Bloomington Press, 1998) pp. 13-34.*A full chapter for any material on the political aspect of Anglo- American relations in Saudi Arabia is a lengthy assessment, which is another reason why Hart’s book is an important part of the historiography. For an American regional perspective, see Paul J. Hare’s biography of his father, Raymond Hare, *Diplomatic Chronicles of the Middle East: A Biography of Raymond A. Hare* (United States :University Press of America1993) p. 22.

⁴⁸ For a Saudi Arabian official perspective see, Hafiz, Wahba, *Arabian Days* (London: Arthur Barker, 1964). For a diplomatic perspective outside of the Anglo-American viewpoint, see D. Van Der Meulen, *The Wells of Ibn Saud* (London: Kegan Paul, 2000) pp. 127-148.

⁴⁹ Important works which give a foundational basis for British and American oil policies include G. Nash, *United States Oil Policy 1890-1964* (United States: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968). E. Chester, *United States Oil*

Out of these works, Aaron David Miller's *1939-1949: Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy* and Mark Stoff's *Oil, War, and American Security: The Search for a National Policy on Foreign Oil, 1941-1947* are the best studies covering the American perspective.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, B.S. McBeth's *British Oil Policy, 1919-1939* is an invaluable source for understanding British oil concerns leading up to the Second World War.⁵¹ In particular, the works by Miller and Stoff to some extent deal with Anglo-American relations, but the focal point of these important studies remain concentrated on oil and are American-centric in perspective.

In this regard, the subject of oil has given the United States a disproportionate sense of the importance of its position in Saudi Arabian affairs. This situation is no less true in light of current day events. The notion that the "Special Relationship" between the United States and Saudi Arabia was somehow predestined has been further boosted in part by what Robert Vitalis has called "mythmaking on the Saudi oil frontier".⁵² The formerly American-owned oil company, ARAMCO, has been accused of crafting its own narrative espousing the inevitability of the Saudi-American relationship through its powerful public relations network, including the company's award-winning magazine, *Aramco World*. With the likes of the Nobel Prize winning author Wallace Stegner contributing articles such as "Discovery! The Story of Aramco Then", "Arabists in the USA" and "Arabia the Beautiful", the oil company has had a hand in burying the critical role played by Britain in the rise of Saudi Arabia.⁵³

To go as far as to concluding that ARAMCO acted solely as an agent of Washington and worked to reduce British power would however be an overstatement. As Irvine Anderson points out in *Aramco, the United States and Saudi Arabia*, the company did not function as an arm of

Policy and Diplomacy: A Twentieth-Century Overview (United States: Greenwood Press, 1983). B. Schwadran, *Middle East Oil and the Great Powers* (United States: Praeger, 1959). Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1991) pp. 280-303 & 392-403. Stephen J. Randall, 'Harold Ickes and United States Foreign Petroleum Policy Planning: 1939-1945' *Business History Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983).

⁵⁰ Mark Stoff, *Oil, War, and American Security: The Search for a National Policy on Foreign Oil, 1941-1947* (New Haven, 1980) p. 58. Stoff, "The Anglo-American Oil Agreement and the Wartime Search for Foreign Oil Policy", *Business History Review* 55, (1981). Aaron David Miller, *1939-1949: Search for Security Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1980).

⁵¹ B.S. McBeth, *British Oil Policy 1919-1939* (United States, 1985).

⁵² Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom-Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London, 2009) p. 69.

⁵³ See, <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/196803/discovery.the.story.of.aramco.then-chapter.3.beachhead.htm>. *Wallace Stegner, American author known as the "Dean of Western writers," also won the 1972 Pulitzer Prize for *An Angel in Repose*. 'Discovery! The Story of Aramco Then' *Aramco World*, Vol.19, No. 3 (May-June, 1968). John R. Starkey, 'Arabist In the U.S.A.' *Aramco World* Vol. 16, No. 4 (July-August, 1965).

the United States government, but existed as a separate institution with its own bottom line.⁵⁴ Leading up to the Second World War, it was ARAMCO that had been dutifully committed to the development of Saudi Arabia, standing in sharp relief to the notable reluctance of the United States government at this stage. In many cases, ARAMCO had in fact sought to thwart the actions of Washington rather than London.⁵⁵ With that being said, ARAMCO's subsequent influence on the historiography has indirectly elevated the status of the Saudi-American relationship, while leaving the British role in the drama either downplayed or ignored.

A Study of a Trying Relationship

The subject of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War still remains fertile ground for those who want to link the allies' relationship with the objective of the United States to replace Great Britain as the premier world power. With the onset of the decline of British power after the Second World War, there is a "determinist" tendency to believe that this shift in dominance was made clearly apparent to the main actors at the time. Building on the variety of historiography laid out above, this thesis makes two primary assertions. The first assertion is that one must depart from the depiction of Saudi Arabia as being solely a preserve for bilateral competition between the allies. Examined more closely, the centrepiece of Anglo-American relations in the Kingdom from 1941 and 1945 was founded on interdependence, which functioned as an incentive for constructive engagement.

While the concept of interdependence in many respects captures the manner in which Anglo-American relations operated globally during the Second World War, it was particularly felt in many areas of the Middle East, a region where the interests of the two allies were increasingly entwined. This also applied to Saudi Arabia itself where interdependence functioned on a strategic and political level while also to a lesser, but still noteworthy extent, a commercial one. These different layers of interdependence served to bind Britain and the United States closely together in Saudi Arabia. Interdependence thus accounts for why in instances of bilateral

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Aramco, The United States and Saudi Arabia*, pp.199-201. For a perspective of an Aramco employee at this time, see Thomas Barger, *Out in the Blue: Letters from Arabia 1937-1940* (United States: Selwa Press, 2000).

⁵⁵ I. Anderson, *Aramco*, p. 199. Policy pushed by the United States government including the Petroleum Reserves Corporation and the Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement were mainly viewed by ARAMCO as "government cartels" that directly threatened the lifeblood of the company.

discord, London and Washington frequently resorted to pursuing policies that sought to extend rather than curtail Anglo-American cooperation. By this logic, the key question for British and American officials with regard to Saudi Arabia would be how their respective countries could enhance each other's geo-strategic position in process of pursuing their own national interests.

Throughout the war years, the Anglo-American experience in Saudi Arabia exposed the limits of both countries' ability to act decisively as the dominant hegemonic force in the Kingdom. Each had its own set of deficiencies in the key fields of influence such as security, finance and statecraft. Fully aware of this state of affairs, key policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic came to a crucial realization. By merging the long-term experience of Britain with the ascendancy of American power in Saudi Arabia, the two allies could offset their individual strategic weaknesses. In other words, in unity there was strength, and the two powers could enhance their influence in Saudi Arabia, whereas individually they might fail. Once establishing that British and American power was marked by a semblance of parity, the interdependent qualities of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia begins to emerge more clearly.⁵⁶

This is not to suggest that British and American strategic, political and commercial interests were always symmetrical between 1941 and 1945. Indeed, the very idea of two countries interlocking their policies obviously comes with inherent tensions. Part of this study's purpose, however, is to demonstrate that the interdependent structure underpinning Anglo-American relations had a way of bridging national interests that at times seemed to be in direct competition. Nor were perceptions of interests fixed on either side, meaning that interests were far more malleable than they have often been portrayed to be. One of the clearest examples that illustrated this idea was the subtle reciprocity at play that aligned Britain's continued political presence in Saudi Arabia with the safeguarding of American commercial stakes. Another case of what on the surface may have seemed to be a catalyst for competition, while in reality proving to be a motivation for cooperation, was the fact that Washington's growing political involvement in the Kingdom cohered with London's larger aim of adding an extra layer of security to its own strategic position in the Middle East. For Britain and the United States, these instances reveal

⁵⁶ The disparity in power plagued relations between Washington and London, especially during the late 1950s when Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's failed in achieving his conception of Anglo-American "interdependence". Nigel Ashton, 'Harold Macmillan and the 'Golden Days' of Anglo-American Relations Revisited, 1957-63' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (September, 2005) p. 696 & Nigel Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: The Irony of Interdependence* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

that the allies' underlying interdependence in Saudi Arabia often meant that the diversity of their national interests could in fact be reconciled and potentially strengthened.

Seen from this perspective, interdependence is a useful term that puts into greater context the cooperative and competitive elements which informed, shaped and characterized the Anglo-American relationship. By 1943 when the Axis threat became less of a concern in the Arabian Peninsula, the United States and Britain redoubled their efforts to coordinate policies in Saudi Arabia for the remainder of the war. However, each country favoured their own methods based on their own unique set of national interests, foreign policy cultures and domestic pressures. For these reasons, the on-going pursuit of cooperation proved frustrating and difficult at times. Nevertheless, this should not take away from the fact that the continued attempts on the part of both the United States and Britain to find a collaborative approach is a testament to the importance each attributed to the value of interdependence in its various forms. Viewed from within this prism, Saudi Arabia during the Second World War was considered a testing ground for wider Anglo-American cooperation, a type of cooperation that would ideally branch out and become a mainstay of the region's geostrategic landscape.

The second main argument of this thesis is that throughout the entire period under consideration, Britain and the United States found a unity of purpose in valuing the Kingdom's unique brand of strategic influence. While Saudi Arabia was not yet the power in material or military terms that it was later to become, it did stand out at this time as a beacon of stability under the rule of Ibn Saud. This was the case at a time when Allied interests in the Middle East were not only under attack by the Axis, but also by the region's home-grown political turmoil. Saudi Arabia and its decision to remain neutral in the Second World War need not be perceived as an "immoral, short-sighted conception" as was once pointed out by John Foster Dulles.⁵⁷ Instead, Saudi Arabia's neutrality was actively encouraged by British and American officials who took it to be a kind of "benevolent neutrality", serving to cloak the Kingdom's quiet assistance to the Allied cause.

The Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia took shape against the backdrop of the emerging post-war liberal international order. It was an era when the British Empire was transformed into the British Commonwealth. It was also a time when American global strategy

⁵⁷ Zachary Karabell, *Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World and the Cold War 1946-1962* (United States: Louisiana State Press, 1999) p.111.

was infused with an unmistakable strain of “New Deal internationalism”. This was no less the case in Saudi Arabia, with the independent Arab kingdom giving form to the Atlantic Charter’s declaration of “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live...”⁵⁸ British and American officials knew that to a large extent their country’s interests hinged on Saudi Arabia remaining a sovereign Arab state and perhaps, more importantly, being *perceived* as such. Yet the allies at times differed in their interpretations of how to best protect the outward image of the Kingdom’s sovereignty. Any policy that made Saudi Arabia look like a client of the allies rather than their partner could jeopardize the legitimacy of the Al-Saud regime and by extension weaken those British and American interests that depended on it. Britain and the United States, in this respect, had to maintain a permanent balancing act that ultimately proved impossible to perpetually sustain. They not only had to pursue their own separate as well as mutual interests within the framework of the wartime alliance, but they also had to be mindful that any decisions that they came to would not infringe on Saudi Arabia’s sovereignty.

To gain a more detailed understanding of these themes, it is important to consider why Saudi Arabia was a driving force in moulding Anglo American relations, not only within the Kingdom, but also throughout the Middle East in many decisive ways.⁵⁹ In this respect, it is crucial to acknowledge that the Kingdom’s influence reached beyond its borders.⁶⁰ On a geo-

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (United States: Harvard University Press, 2005) pp. 304-305. Also see, Russell Buhite, *Patrick J. Hurley and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1973). H.W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War: Loy Henderson and the Rise of American Empire* (United States, Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 115-136. For a contemporary account, see Wendell Willkie, *One World* (United States: Simon & Schuster, 1943); For a British perspective, see Suke Wolton, *Lord Hailey, the Colonial Office and the Politics of Race and Empire in the Second World War: The Loss of White Prestige* (Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) p. 3. For the seminal work on the Arab perspective, see George Antonius, *Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (United States: Simon Publications 1939).

⁵⁹ For more on works that explore Saudi Arabia’s wider regional influence leading up to and during the Second World War, see Fawaz Traboulsi, ‘Saudi Expansion: the Lebanese connection, 1924-1952’, Madawi Al-Rasheed, (ed.), *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi political, religious and media frontiers* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008) pp. 65-78. & D.C. Watt, ‘The Foreign Policy of Ibn Saud 1936-1939’. For material that focuses on Saudi Arabia’s modern global reach in international affairs. See Al-Rasheed, (ed.), *Kingdom without Borders* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008). Anthony Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* (London: Praeger, 2003). As’ad Abukhahil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia: Royalty, Fundamentalism and Global Power* (United States: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ For more on works that explore Saudi Arabia’s wider regional influence leading up to and during the Second World War, see Fawaz Traboulsi, ‘Saudi Expansion: the Lebanese connection, 1924-1952’, Madawi Al-Rasheed, (ed.), *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi political, religious and media frontiers* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008) pp. 65-78. D.C. Watt, ‘The Foreign Policy of Ibn Saud 1936-1939’, 1963. For material that focuses on Saudi Arabia’s modern global reach in international affairs See Al-Rasheed, (ed.), *Kingdom without Borders* (London: Hurst & Company, 2008). Anthony Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* (London:

strategic level, the country's location was well-suited. During the Second World War, Saudi Arabia – in the eyes of British and American authorities - emerged as a key geostrategic cross-junction linking the Mediterranean, North African and Asian wartime theatres. No one described the significance of Saudi Arabia's location more succinctly than Ibn Saud himself, when on January 2, 1939 he wrote the following to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain: "Our country is the important central point of a circular area of the world's surface..."⁶¹ Centrally located between the key Allied supply routes, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf and given the country's vastness and its being one quarter of the size of the continental United States, Saudi Arabia in the minds of Allied war planners could have multiple uses, not least in terms of providing air routes and being a potential supply depot and staging post to launch future military operations.

Coupled with the strategic importance of its location, the *sui generis* stature of Saudi Arabia within the Moslem and Arab world impacted greatly on British and American thinking in terms of the ongoing propaganda against the Axis powers. Although not reaching the heights of Caliphate, as the "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" of the Islamic faith, a large concentration of religious and political influence rested firmly with Ibn Saud. His appeal to millions of Moslems from Casablanca to Bandung might swing popular support to either the Allied, or the Axis cause.⁶² In this respect, the king played a vital role shaping Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. At this stage in the Kingdom's state development, for all intents and purposes, Ibn Saud *was* the Saudi Arabian Government. Although officials such as Sheik Yussef Yassin and Abdullah Suleimann held titles like *Minister of Foreign Affairs* and *Minister of Finance*, these men were not *de facto* in charge of the great offices of state. Instead, their role in government was to be part of a small coterie of officials who acted as the King's *Privy Council*. Holding such absolute power, the British feted Ibn Saud and even nicknamed him "Napoleon of the Desert". Not to be outdone, President Roosevelt - after meeting King Ibn Saud in person the first time in 1945 - boasted: "I learned more about that whole Jewish-Moslem problem by talking with Ibn Saud for five minutes than I could have learned in the exchange of two or three dozen

Praeger, 2003). As'ad Abukhahil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia: Royalty, Fundamentalism and Global Power* (United States: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

⁶¹ Public Records Office, Kew: Foreign Office Records, FO 371 23268 - Report by Reader Bullard regarding Ibn Saud's personal message to Neville Chamberlain, January 2, 1939.

⁶² NARA: RG 59 Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954, Lot File # 57 D 298, Box 15. *Importance of the Moslem World in the War*, Murray to Berle, January 17, 1942.

letters”.⁶³ In the words of Donald Cameron Watt, for British and American officials, Ibn Saud was “all things to all men”.⁶⁴

This combination of religious authority and political autonomy went hand in hand with Ibn Saud being regarded as a mainstay of regional stability. Since its founding, Saudi Arabia had principally been guided by a policy of non-revisionism, as is still largely the case today. But during the war, Britain and the United States wanted to mold Ibn Saud into a type of Allied-Arab arbiter. In this role, the King would position Saudi Arabia as a regional counterbalance against threats to Anglo-American interests whether these took the form of Axis intrigue, the rising tide of Arab nationalism or the hazard of Soviet encroachment in the Middle East.⁶⁵ Conversely, Ibn Saud also looked to the allies in helping to secure his regime. His embrace of *Pax Britannica* leading up to and during the Second World War gave his country financial support and military protection, while the American entry into Saudi Arabian affairs would provide extra defensive safeguards, and just as importantly, money.⁶⁶

Despite the country’s feudalistic portrayal, British and American officials both recognized that in some ways Saudi Arabia was strikingly modern as it was in line with the prevailing *zeitgeist* by virtue of its independence as a sovereign Arab nation. Looking out of the window of his airplane when flying over Saudi Arabia on his return from the Tehran Conference in 1943, President Roosevelt told Frances Perkins, the Secretary of Labor that after the “damn war is over”, he and Eleanor would come back to Saudi Arabia and try to start an “operation like the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority)”.⁶⁷ Although Roosevelt’s own progressive views seem

⁶³ PRO: FO 371/35166, Minute by Harry Eyres, October 26, 1942. Also see Sam Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (London: Rupert Hart- Davis, 1952) pp. 480-481.

⁶⁴ Donald Cameron Watt, “The Foreign Policy of Ibn Saud 1936-1939, *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* Volume 50, Issue 2 (April 1963) pp. 152-160.

⁶⁵ The attitudes of American and British officialdom during the Second World War were in many respects similar to the United States’ view at the time of Eisenhower Doctrine; the hope that Saudi Arabia would develop into a leading pro-western bulwark in the Middle East. March 28, 1956, Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, Eisenhower Diaries. Also see, Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa’ud and the Making of US Relations* (United States: Indiana University Press, 2002). Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (United States: North Carolina Press, 2006). Roby C. Barrett, *The Greater Middle East and the Cold War: US Foreign Policy under Eisenhower and Kennedy* (London: IB Tauris, 2010).

⁶⁶ For a closer examination of Saudi Arabian security concerns during this period, see Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (United States: Cornell University Press, 1985) pp. 57-71.

⁶⁷ Frances Perkins ‘The Roosevelt I Knew’ *Colliers*, August 24, 1945.

visionary, they were equally a product of his old world sense of noblesse oblige: “the conviction that privileged Americans should take a part in relieving national and international ills”.⁶⁸

Having the British and Americans play the stereotypical roles of the “reactionary” and the forward-thinking “progressive” power respectively does little to further our understanding of the relationship of the allies in Saudi Arabia. The attitudes of the two allies *vis-a-vis* Saudi Arabia and Ibn Saud were by no means static and often defied categorization. Sometimes, the Americans seized the notion that the Kingdom was too antiquated to change. At other stages, British officials would argue that policies constructed for Saudi Arabia should be more contemporary, worthy of the country’s dynamic status as a fully independent Arab state.

The diplomatic historian Gaddis Smith has suggested that what all American policymakers wanted to ask their British counterparts during the Second World War was: “What have you been planning for the more liberal post-war world, which is what this war is ultimately all about”?⁶⁹ Based on Smith’s hypothetical question, it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that in Saudi Arabia, the United States was looking toward a bright future, while Britain gazed back at past achievements, hoping the country would enjoy its pre-war status after the war. British officials in Saudi Arabia were in fact on the same page with their American colleagues. They too realized that in order to remain a relevant actor, they would need to institute policies within the framework of the liberal post-war international order that they had helped to create.

One of the salient features of British foreign policy during this era was the country’s search for security. Although by the end of the Second World War, 200,000 British troops presided over the Suez Canal zone - a stronghold that was roughly the size of Wales - the troubles of maintaining such a substantial military presence, coupled with economic woes at home, meant that the British Government could not carry on as the Middle East’s sole regional policeman.⁷⁰ From London’s point of view, endorsing closer Anglo-American collaboration in Saudi Arabia was part of addressing this strategic problem. Having established a formative presence in the Kingdom, Washington could now take on some of the burden of meeting the many requirements of the Saudi Arabian Government, with British interests being by extension reinforced and protected. Moreover, Britain supporting the United States’ commitment to Saudi

⁶⁸ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy: 1932-1945* (United States: Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 4.

⁶⁹ Quoted from, Warren Kimball, ‘Lend-Lease and the Open Door: The Temptation of British Opulence 1937-1942’ *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 86, No. 2. (June, 1971) pp. 232-259.

⁷⁰ Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East*, p. 9.

Arabia was yet another measure to encourage the Americans not to revert back to policies of isolationism.

At the same time, suspicion existed on the British side with regard to Washington's proposal that both countries should be equally committed to subsidizing the Kingdom, even after 1944 when the Axis threat in the Middle East had virtually disappeared. With Britain no longer having the economic resources to match the amount of the subsidies that the much richer United States was providing, the Foreign Office started wondering if this largesse was meant to be an exclusionary ploy. However, a far greater concern amongst British officials was that the modernising thrust of American policy was moving too quickly, threatening to have negative repercussions on Saudi Arabian society and fatally undermining the country's essential sovereignty. This could ultimately result in the destabilization of the Al-Saud regime as well as Britain's Middle East *Imperia*. With these misgivings in mind, British policymakers in their final conclusion accepted the trajectory of American policy, believing it to be worth the price of the wider benefits of Anglo-American cooperation.

Lord Beloff, author of *Britain's Liberal Empire*, once argued that Britain gave way to American power during the Second World War, but maintained that the United States failed to reproduce the order and stability that accompanied *Pax Britannica*.⁷¹ Developing further Beloff's contention, the United States government - despite being a rising superpower - was less confident in ability to act in places that it was largely unfamiliar with, such as Saudi Arabia. After years of neglecting the Arab Kingdom, the State Department had only managed to establish a legation in the country in May 1942. In contrast, Britain's long-standing historical links with Saudi Arabia had given London an unmatched advantage when it came to influencing the policies of the country.

In retrospect, one aspect of the allied relationship that deserves further attention is the incentive of the United States to develop an Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia. While anxiety existed that working closely with Britain might lead to the United States being painted with an "imperial" brush, having access to British statecraft and agency was also considered instrumental in elevating American influence in the Kingdom. Even with regard to the perception

⁷¹ Lord Beloff, *The Special Relationship*, pp. 249-252. Pursuing a similar theme, see, D.C. Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's place, 1900-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) pp. 90-111 & p. 250. B.J.C. McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain's Loss of Global Preeminence to the United States* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 340.

that Britain may try to take over the American monopoly on Saudi Arabian oil, nationalist outcries were brushed aside in favour of dealing with the issue from a point of inter-allied cooperation. In the end, a consensus emerged among a wide range of policymakers on the American side holding that the sustained British influence in Saudi Arabia contributed positively to American oil security.

Numerous studies still primarily point to those episodes showing British and American authorities in confrontation rather than in collaboration. One noted example of this dynamic is the announcement by the American minister to Saudi Arabia, Alexander Kirk. In the summer of 1944 he feared that Saudi Arabia was turning into an active ideological battleground between American and British world systems competing for a “stable world order”. Although this fiery quotation is widely cited, it is equally misinterpreted.⁷² Kirk did not say that Anglo-American competition was unavoidable in Saudi Arabia. Rather, his statement served as a prescient warning to American officials, imploring them to work more closely with their British colleagues in order that avoidable misunderstandings would not lead to greater recriminations.

Indeed, two months after Kirk’s assessment, the American legation advocated strongly saying that Saudi Arabia presented “the best test case for concrete cooperation with the British in the Middle East and we should succeed in making it work here”.⁷³ In London, the head of the Near East Department (NED) at the Foreign Office, C.W. Baxter, also made the exact same point: “To some degree Anglo-American cooperation in Jedda has become a test of the possibility of Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East as a whole”.⁷⁴ The message in this context is clear: the belief that Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia actively contributed to the broader aim of promoting regional political and economic stability.

It is also important to note that cooperation did not solely emerge as an unwilling wartime necessity. Indeed, more attention needs to be paid to the fact that British and American policymakers revamped their efforts to coordinate policies even after the Axis threat dissipated in 1943. This is illustrated by the compacts agreed to by the two wartime allies culminating in the Anglo-American 50-50 Agreement, the Anglo-American Oil Agreement and the Stettinius Declaration that were all concluded in 1944. The objective of the allies to align policies in Saudi

⁷² For an example of a historian distorting Kirk’s quote, see Wm. Roger Louis, *British Empire in the Middle East*, p. 183.

⁷³ Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1965) Jacobs to Hull, June 3, 1944, p.701.

⁷⁴ PRO: FO 921/191 25(4)144/36. FO to Cairo and Jeddah, July 5, 1944.

Arabia was in all probability overly ambitious. The United States' desire to strengthen the Saudi Arabian government ran parallel to its efforts to solidify its own position in the Kingdom. The expansion of Washington's interest in post-war Saudi Arabia delineated more clearly the chasm separating British and American policy priorities. However, one cannot downplay the fact that in many instances throughout this period in Saudi Arabia, the United States and Britain subordinated their own national agendas for one that was in fact Anglo-American in nature.⁷⁵

This thesis offers a new interpretation of the state of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the period 1941-1945. As the historiographical review has shown, historians of Anglo-American relations have generally tended to characterize the relationship as one of rivalry and polarization. My thesis, however, departs from this view arguing that when closely examined, this period - while demonstrating the limits of bilateral cooperation - more crucially points to the fact that Britain and the United States viewed favourably the reciprocal benefits that would flow from integrating their policies in Saudi Arabia. Rather than a struggle for dominance, the unique value of Saudi Arabia's regional influence encouraged the search for an Anglo-American partnership, one that can be described as being built on the concept of strategic interdependence.

While instances of underlying national rivalry can be spotted wherever the wartime alliance functioned, the force of commonalities binding the allies should neither be discounted. William Eddy, arguably the point of origin of Anglophobic sentiment as far as the American contingent goes, could still firmly state that the British were a "...very brave people at war. *We can thank God we are Anglo-Saxons*".⁷⁶ It is this emphasis on a shared bond that invariably jumps to the forefront and reveals a more textured picture, standing in contrast to traditional depictions of Saudi Arabia as an arena in which power politics reigned supreme and British and American worldviews clashed.

Under these conditions, the Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia began with the need for the two countries to work together in the struggle of the Second World War and subsequently evolved to include many other important issues. Even though cooperation ebbed

⁷⁵ See Chapters V & VI which examines the Anglo-American debates surrounding subsidies and military and financial mission.

⁷⁶ Seeley Mudd Library: William Eddy Papers. Box 5, Folder 13, May 6 1944.

and flowed and did not always meet British and American expectations, the continuous diplomatic efforts of the allies to forge an Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia were ongoing throughout the war. Consequently, Britain and the United States continuously sought to eliminate their differences, ever mindful that their partnership would be necessary as they looked ahead to an uncertain post-war world. The complex character of the Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia for this reason defies easy categorisation and will be the subject of closer scrutiny in the chapters to follow.

Chapter I

Setting the Stage: Anglo-American Relations and Ibn Saud prior to 1941

Introduction

The origins of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia can be found by charting the pathways through which British and American influence took hold in the Kingdom preceding 1941. Before Britain and the United States began their collaborative involvement in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War, their experiences in the country had largely existed independently from one another, with the British being more heavily engaged than their American counterparts. In many respects, their attitudes toward Saudi Arabia matched the priority that each country had placed on the Middle Eastern region in general. For policymakers in London, the Middle East was one of the most important dimensions of British foreign relations. Throughout the region, Britain's unrivalled network of military installations, diplomatic posts, and commercial holdings effectively amounted to an "informal" empire that secured London's imperial link to India, Southeast Asia and the Antipodes. Britain, in turn, took a keen interest in the rise of Saudi power that was sweeping the Arabian Peninsula. Despite occasional political differences, the Anglo-Saudi relationship, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, was one of the foundations upon which the established order was built.

In comparison, the United States Government in the years prior to the Second World War had little to do with Middle Eastern affairs, or for that matter, Saudi Arabia. Instead, non-governmental actors worked as the main conduits that fostered a viable American presence in the region. In this respect, the success of personal diplomacy, philanthropy and private commercial ventures were indirect, yet powerful areas of American influence which helped formalize nascent Saudi-American relations. Although it is difficult to find common ground between Britain and the United States in terms of their experiences dealing with Saudi Arabia, their interests there were inextricably bound less to a country, but more specifically to a person, the founder of the Kingdom, Ibn Saud.

Another objective of this chapter is to explore the Saudi king's reputation as a statesman, his position within the context of the international crisis leading up to 1941 and what this meant

for Britain and the United States. Both countries were acutely aware of the regional role played by Ibn Saud, a role also realized by the Axis powers. From the perspective of the Axis powers, particularly Germany and Italy, Saudi Arabia was one of the few Arab states not to be under the official sway of either the British or French Empires. In this respect, the Kingdom was an open opportunity for the Axis countries to project their respective influence into the Middle East; a region of the world where their influence still lacked prominence. As Seth Arsenian, the scholar who worked in the Office of War Information during the war, makes clear, “to Germany, Italy and Japan, the destruction of British and Allied Power in the Middle East, or the winning of their side of any of the Middle Eastern state would have immeasurably increased their chances for success”.⁷⁷ Therefore, this chapter argues Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia was in part a reaction to block the revisionist powers from further forging diplomatic links with the Kingdom. Providing much-needed stability in a region beset by turmoil, Ibn Saud’s rule in Saudi Arabia, joined with his status as an independent Arab ruler, made him an ideal candidate for combating the flood of Axis propaganda that targeted an Arab population already sceptical of British and American motives.

Britain, the Middle East and Saudi Arabia: Pre-Second World War

From the perspectives of British and American official thinking, each country was prone to believe that it was held in greater favour when compared to other nations. When it came to the Middle East, this prevailing sentiment of national “exceptionalism” tended to run especially high. Looking first at Britain, the *Pax Britannica* long-established in the Arab World came affixed with a popular mythology that generations of Britons had relished. Reflecting on the belief that Britain enjoyed an intrinsic connection with the region and its people, the historian Geoffrey Moorhouse writes:

“Though it had never been part of her Empire, no other European country had ever had the same patronizing connection with the Arab countries of the Middle East, No one else’s history has produced such a long string of figures to compare with Burton, Doughty, Stanhope, Lawrence, Thomas, Stark, Philby or Thesiger:

⁷⁷ Seth Arsenian, ‘Wartime Propaganda in the Middle East’ *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (October, 1948) pg. 417.

*men and women with a mystical and romantic feeling of kinship with the Bedouin and the desert”.*⁷⁸

In political terms, as well, British influence in the Middle East predominated. Nominally independent, Egypt was still essentially a holding of the British Empire, under the thumb of a large contingent of British troops stationed in the Suez Canal zone.⁷⁹ Similarly, Palestine, the Hashemite Kingdoms of Transjordan, and Iraq, were League of Nations mandates that had been transformed into key pillars of Britain’s imperial defense strategy.⁸⁰ Lastly, circling the Arabian periphery, the Crown Colony of Aden, the Trucial Coast and Kuwait had been bound by treaty to the British Government since 1839, 1853 and 1899 respectively.⁸¹

Given Saudi Arabia’s location in the heart of Britain’s “informal” Middle Eastern empire, Britain’s close relationship with Ibn Saud leading up to the Second World War was an established fact. Speaking to the British minister in 1939, Ibn Saud claimed that there were two kinds of relationships between countries. At one end, there was the “the relationship of fear, fear of subjugation for the conquered,” and at the other end of the spectrum, there were associations like the one between Britain and Saudi Arabia, “based on mutual interest and co-operation”.⁸² The initial British response had been mixed when Ibn Saud started to consolidate his power in the Nejd in 1902. Those British officials who dealt with Ibn Saud directly viewed him

⁷⁸ Geoffrey Moorhouse, *The Diplomats: The Foreign Office Today* (Britain: Jonathan Cape, 1977) p. 39.

⁷⁹ For more details on this period of Anglo-Egyptian relations, see, Laila Morsy ‘The Military Clauses of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, 1936’ *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter, 1984) pp. 67-97. Miles Lampson, *The Killearn Diaries, 1934-1946: The Diplomatic and Personal Record of Lord Killearn (Sir Miles Lampson), High Commissioner and Ambassador, Egypt* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972).

⁸⁰ Anthony Clayton, ‘Imperial Defence and Security, 1900-1968’, (eds.) Judith Brown & Wm. Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire; Volume IV, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 287-289.

⁸¹ For information regarding British relations with Kuwait, see Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf: 1894-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p. 108. For the Trucial Coast, see James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers and the British in the 19th Century Gulf* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 46. For Aden, see, R.J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule: 1839-1967* (London: Hurst, 1975) p. 254.

⁸² PRO: FO 371/ 35147 E140/69/25. Stonehewer-Bird to Eden, December 13, 1942. Carsten Niebuhr, the famous 18th Century Danish explorer, wrote he found an Englishman when he arrived at Jeddah on October 29, 1762 trading in “almonds from Taif and balm from Mecca”. See Gerald de Gaury, *Arabian Phoenix*, p. 26. In an earlier incident in 1727, Britons from East India Company had been massacred in the port town of Jeddah. According to an eyewitness, the Arabs had “mangled and cut into pieces in the most barbarous manner and other were exposed to the Mob, and were most inhumanely murdered, constantly upbraiding us as Christians”. See British Library (BL) India Office Records (IOR): MSSEUR IOR Neg. 11 668, Microfilm. John Fullerton ‘Account of the Massacre of English at Jidda and the Subsequent Transactions’, 1727.

favourably, but the opinions of Percy Cox, Political Resident of the Persian Gulf, and later Captain William Shakespear, Political Resident of Kuwait, ultimately pertained to British security in India rather than the wider Middle East. For those back in Whitehall at the Foreign Office, Ibn Saud continued to be observed as a peripheral figure in Arabian politics, a significant step below his rival, the Hashemite Sharif Hussein of Mecca.⁸³ Expressing the prevailing view during the First World War, D.G. Hogarth, the famous Arabist who was at the time working for the Arab Bureau, noted: “It should not be forgotten that of the two, the Sharif and Ibn Saud; Ibn Saud is... the less powerful potentate and far less able to influence the present general Eastern situation in our favour”.⁸⁴ While the British Government finally ended up backing Hussein to lead the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire, it is worth remembering that concurrently Britain also saw the potential strategic dividends of improving relations with Ibn Saud. Under the terms of the Anglo-Saudi Treaty of 1915, London recognized Ibn Saud’s authority in the Nejd and promised to protect him from foreign threats, while also offering a yearly subsidy and deliveries of modern weaponry.⁸⁵ In return for British assistance, Ibn Saud would exploit those Arab *vilayets* under Ottoman authority by waging battle against his Eastern Arabian rival, the House of Rashid, a tribe in alliance with the Porte. Years later, a similar *quid pro quo* would come into effect during the Second World War that saw British largesse exchanged for Ibn Saud’s support of Allied interests.

Courting Ibn Saud during the First World War in the long run proved to be more valuable strategy than London’s well-known alliance with the Sharif.⁸⁶ As relations with the erratic Hussein deteriorated in the early 1920s, Ibn Saud began to emerge as the more reliable regional ally. In this respect, the decision made in September 1924 not to intercede in the war between the Sharif and Ibn Saud was evidence of Britain's tacit approval of the Al Saud gaining control over

⁸³ Representing the prevailing attitude, E. Parkes of the Foreign Office wrote a year before the First World War, “*It would be most unwise for (the British government) to entangle themselves with the Wahabbi Amir (Ibn Saud)*” See, British Documents on Foreign Affairs (BDFA). D.C. Watt, David Gillard, Kenneth Bourne, (eds.) Vol. 18, Part I, *From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*. (United States: University Publications of America, 1984) E. Parkes July 3, 1913.

⁸⁴ Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East 1916-1920* (United States: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) p.114.

⁸⁵ Vassiliev, *History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 237-238.

⁸⁶ For a closer look at Britain’s consideration of the Ibn Saud-Hussein rivalry at this time, see Gary Troeller, ‘Ibn Sa’ud and Sharif Husain: A Comparison in Importance in the Early Years of the First World War’ *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Sep., 1971).

the Hedjaz.⁸⁷ Almost three years later in May 1927, Britain concluded the Treaty of Jeddah with Ibn Saud, a benchmark moment in Anglo-Saudi relations which was characterized by relative political equality.⁸⁸ Under the treaty's terms and conditions, Britain recognized the complete independence of the Kingdom of Hedjaz, Nejd and the Dependencies hoping to eliminate any colonial resentment which with their inequalities had marred London's diplomatic relations with surrounding Arab states.⁸⁹ In this way, Ibn Saud's political independence distinguished him as a willing associate to British hegemony rather than a vassal subjugated by it. This emphasis on the issue of sovereignty as outlined in the Treaty of Jeddah would become a recurrent theme in British policymaking towards Saudi Arabia during the Second World War.

After the treaty was signed, Ibn Saud's close cooperation with the "infidel" British led to internal unrest amongst his most hardcore Wahabbi followers, the *Ikhwan*.⁹⁰ In 1929, Britain's timely military support - armoured cars and planes courtesy of the Royal Air Force - allowed Ibn Saud to crush the attempted coup by the *Ikhwan*, which had up to that point posed the most serious threat to his regime.⁹¹ Nonetheless, amid the vexed world of Middle Eastern politics, Britain and Ibn Saud naturally ran into conflicts of interests in the interwar period. Issues like Britain's relationship with the Hashemite kingdoms, Palestine and contested territorial claims in the Arabian Peninsula in the 1930s were at times areas of contention. But these examples do not diminish the reality that Anglo-Saudi relations throughout the decade remained active and close.⁹²

⁸⁷ See St. John Philby, *Arabian Jubilee* (London, Robert Hale Limited, 1952) p. 58 & Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 236.

⁸⁸ Daniel Silverfarb, 'The Treaty of Jeddah of May 1927' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (July, 1982) p. 285.

⁸⁹ For material on Britain's imperial view of the Middle East during the 1930's, see DK Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Michael Cohen & Martin Kolinsky, *Britain and the Middle East in the 1930's: Security Problems 1935-1939* (Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992).

⁹⁰ For the best in-depth study of the role of the *Ikhwan* and the formation of Saudi Arabia, including the group's anti-British attitudes, see, John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Sa'udi Kingdom, 1910-1930* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978) pp. 121-155.

⁹¹ Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 268-280.

⁹² For the best work that covers this era of Anglo-Saudi relations, see Clive Leatherdale's *The Imperial Oasis*.

The United States, the Middle East, Saudi Arabia: Pre-Second World War

Given that the United States' involvement in the Middle East up to the Second World War remained meagre, the historical narrative to some degree has been cast in quixotic fashion; much of it based on what Michael Oren calls a shibboleth of "power, faith and fantasy".⁹³ Wartime officials like William Donovan, founder of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), valued a certain paradox in which American influence arose from a policy of non-interference. The United States, according to this point of view, was distinct from other countries such as Britain because its aims in the region went beyond the thirst for power.⁹⁴ In full self-congratulatory mode, Donovan confidently told the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1942:

*"...American prestige and influence in the Near East is still probably as high as ever. This results from a realization by the peoples of the Near East that the US has no territorial or vested economic interests in the area. Furthermore, since actions speak louder than words, this widespread goodwill toward the US has become what might be described as a deep-seated conviction on the part of the peoples in this area, due mainly to a century of American Missionary educational and philanthropic efforts that have not been tarnished by material motive or interest. No other member of the United Nations is in such a position".*⁹⁵

The historian Fawaz Gerges perfectly captures the belief of American officials from Donovan's generation who took it for granted that the United States "established dynamic and cordial relations with Arabs and Muslims, who viewed America as a progressive island amid European reaction".⁹⁶ If the United States having this sort of altruistic interest in the region was indeed the case, it is still difficult to pinpoint a specific and coherent American foreign policy in the Middle East before the Second World War. Overall, in the 1930s the diplomatic apparatus of

⁹³ Michael Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East from 1776 to the Present* (New York: Norton Press, 2008) pp. 9-16.

⁹⁴ For other recent works that explore the concept of American "exceptionalism" in the Middle East, see Douglass Little, *American Orientalism: The United States in the Middle East since 1945* (United States: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (California: California University Press, 2005). J. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East-Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1971).

⁹⁵ NARA: RG 218/190/1/11/6, Box 149. 'O.S.S. Mission in the Near East', Donovan to Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 27, 1942. Arguably, the two American figures that would have the greatest impact on the country's relationship with Saudi Arabia – Harold Hoskins and William Eddy – both grew up in the same American missionary background in Lebanon. See Chapters 3 & 5.

⁹⁶ Fawaz Gerges, 'Islam & Muslims in the Mind of America' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 588 (July, 2003) p. 74.

the United States functioned on a far more insular basis, grouped with other nations that - according to B.J.C. McKercher - were “regional powers with regional interests”.⁹⁷ The United States did not possess a network of military bases or diplomatic stations in the Middle East like their British counterparts. The paucity of the official American presence can be judged by the fact that the State Department, as late as 1944, had only three officers who specialized in Middle Eastern languages.⁹⁸ Against this backdrop, the few mainstays of interwar American policy, which in fact existed in the region, centred largely on commercial trade, monitoring the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine and fostering what was then referred to as “Arab goodwill”.⁹⁹

Looking at the origins of the Saudi-American relationship, when the United States Government was considering whether to formally recognize the Kingdom, Wallace Murray, the chief of the Near East Division of the State Department, was told by the well-known Arab-American intellectual, Ahman Rihani, that “Ibn Saud might be regarded as the greatest Arab since Mohammed himself”.¹⁰⁰ But before extending diplomatic recognition to “the Government of King Ibn Saud” in February 1931, it is noteworthy that Washington first asked permission from London to do so.¹⁰¹ Understood to be a British sphere of influence, therefore early American interest in Ibn Saud and the Kingdom came not from the strategic policy enacted by the State Department, but had rather been fostered by the “personal diplomacy” of an American citizen named Charles Crane.¹⁰² A former diplomat during the Taft and Wilson administrations, as well as one of America’s premier philanthropists, Crane had been closely involved with Arab

⁹⁷ B.J.C. McKercher, *Transition of Power: Britain’s loss of global preeminence to the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 340.

⁹⁸ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 21.

⁹⁹ For further accounts of American policy in the Middle East during the inter-war period, see John Denovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939* (United States: University of Minnesota Press, 1963). Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (United States: W.W. Norton Press, 2007). Thomas A. Bryson, *Seeds of Mid East Crisis: United States Diplomatic Role in the Middle East During World War II* (United States: McFarland Press, 1981). Philip Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East 1919-1945* (United States: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

¹⁰⁰ NARA: Microfilm T1179 Reel #1. Murray to Stimson, January 26, 1931. Ahman Rihani was an early Arab Nationalist theorist who had befriended Ibn Saud on his travels to Arabia in the 1920s. See, Nathan C. Funk & Betty Sitka, (eds.) *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West: A Pioneering Call for Arab American Understanding* (United States: University American press, 2004).

¹⁰¹ FRUS 1931. Vol. II. *Papers Related to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, Stimson to Dawes, May 1, 1931, p. 551.

¹⁰² The British historian Arnold Toynbee included Charles Crane along with Nehru, T.E. Lawrence and the Webbs in a contemporary study of famous personalities possessing “interestingness”. See Arnold Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) p. 213.

affairs for decades.¹⁰³ In the Arab world, he had a well-known public profile owing to his work on the Crane-King commission in 1919, an American commission that had been highly critical of British and French policies towards the Arab territories of the former Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁴

Despite visiting Saudi Arabia on his own initiative, Crane emerged as a *de facto* representative of the United States. The role that Crane took on was a success in that he managed to forge a close personal bond with Ibn Saud. In Jeddah, Crane was given an audience with Ibn Saud. The two men discussed ways in which Saudi Arabia's natural resources could be developed and put to commercial use. One of Crane's engineers, Karl Twitchell, who years later would be one of the key individuals to help initiate Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia, was given the task of surveying the Hedjaz for water and mining deposits.¹⁰⁵ Based on the work of his geological surveys, Twitchell was later hired by the California - Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC) to assist Lloyd Hamilton, the president of the company, in negotiating the purchase of oil concessions with Ibn Saud in 1933. Scholars led by Robert Vitalis, however, are sceptical of Crane's motives, believing that his philanthropy was a means in which to gain the rights to explore oil deposits in Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁶ Thomas W. Lippman takes the opposite point of view, contending that Crane's offer showed Ibn Saud that Americans were "willing to help him and asked nothing in return".¹⁰⁷ In reality, Charles Crane's motives probably falls somewhere in-between these diametrically opposed interpretations. But undoubtedly, Crane played a crucial role in creating an American identity in Saudi Arabia that portrayed the United States as a distant and neutral benefactor.

Nevertheless, in the decade of the 1930s, the American government's contact with Ibn Saud was limited. The fact that in 1936, the American Consul General in Alexandria Egypt was sent to Jeddah to report on the potential advantages of opening an American legation, and came away concluding "that the development of American interests (in Saudi Arabia) does not warrant

¹⁰³ George Antonius's seminal work on Arab Nationalism, *Arab Awakening*, was dedicated to Charles Crane. See, George Antonius, *Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (United States: Simon Publications 1939). Years later, it was said that Crane's overtures for Arab harmony had assisted in ending Ibn Saud's war with Yemen in 1934. See F.W. Brecher 'Charles Crane's Crusade for the Arabs, 1919-1939' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (January, 1988) p. 46.

¹⁰⁴ Harry N. Howard, *The King Crane Commission* (Beirut, Kyahuts, 1963).

¹⁰⁵ Schwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers*, p. 288.

¹⁰⁶ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁷ Speaking of Ibn Saud's bond with the United States, Lippman goes so far to claim that from the time of Crane's arrival, "the king inclined toward American interests in economic and strategic decisions." See Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, p. 13.

the establishment of any sort of official representation” highlights this disconnect between the two nations.¹⁰⁸ The more important and influential relationship during this time was the one between the American oil company CASOC and Saudi Arabia. Aaron David Miller has pointed out that the subject of Middle Eastern oil in the 1930s was “primarily a story of the oilmen themselves - of risks, maverick companies and potential profit”.¹⁰⁹ Given the United States’ status at the time as the world’s largest exporter of oil, the development of a source of commercially viable oil in Saudi Arabia in 1938 received relatively scant attention from officials back in Washington. As will be shown in Chapter V, only after 1943 would the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Navy, Department of Interior and State Department link the CASOC oil concession directly to the United States’ long-term national security. The Division of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) at the State Department undoubtedly followed the progress of the oil concessions, yet it would not be until 1939 - under looming war clouds - that an American official would recommend naming a diplomatic minister to Saudi Arabia.

Ibn Saud during the Early Years of the Second World War: 1939-1940

Besides being the premier independent Arab statesman, Ibn Saud’s reputation leading up the Second World War grew from the fact that he had almost single-handedly formed a nation in a place whose nomadic population, said one historian, lived for centuries in a state of “barbaric independence”.¹¹⁰ When Ibn Saud emerged as the head of the Wahabbist tribal dynasty, the House of Saud, which remains the core political power structure of the modern day kingdom - the concept of the nation-state had not yet arrived in the territories constituting modern day Saudi Arabia. The area had been set apart from the rest of the Middle East by a combination of geographic remoteness, harsh climate, and religious singularity. The strong-willed people living there, the Bedouin, knew of no governmental authority. They existed within a small community of disparate autonomous families or tribal organizations, in which the *ghazzu* (the raid) was a way of life. Even at the height of the Age of Imperialism, the two great foreign powers of the region kept away from the Arabian hinterland. Britain maintained a policy of non-intervention in

¹⁰⁸ Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library (FDRPL): Franklin Roosevelt Papers. PPF, Container 3500, Saudi Arabia Hull to Roosevelt, June 30, 1939.

¹⁰⁹ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Howarth, *The Desert King*, p. 28.

the Arabian interior, while the Ottoman Empire - having laid claim to this domain since the reign of Salim I in the 16th century - exercised little tangible control over the area and the local emirs who held sway there.¹¹¹

Given these conditions, Ibn Saud's triumph of forging a modern nation state appears all the more remarkable. Beginning with his capture of Riyadh in 1902, over the next thirty years, Ibn Saud - in a series of military campaigns, along with shrewd political manoeuvring - unified a land divided by significant geographic, ethnic and economic differences. Under his leadership, the territories of the Nejd, Qasim, Hasa, Ha'il, Hedjaz and Asir all became annexed into a single political entity that would come to be known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.¹¹² Whereas his Wahabbi predecessors had once been infamous due to their "fundamentalist" views, Ibn Saud was notably moderate in outlook towards friend and foe alike.¹¹³ The British explorer and diplomat, Gertrude Bell, who had witnessed his rise to power first hand, spoke for many of her British contemporaries when she praised Ibn Saud's *sangfroid* and called him a "statesman", which to her was the "final word of commendation".¹¹⁴ As the famed Arab historian Phillip Hitti noted, "not since the days of the Prophet" had the region enjoyed such stability, public order and a sense of cohesiveness as it did during this time, and it was all a result of Ibn Saud's "Pax Saudica".

When the British War Cabinet received a "top secret" memorandum on May 20, 1940 from the Foreign Office - five days before the Anglo-French evacuation at Dunkirk - concerning the effects that the Allied reversals in Europe were having on the populations of the Middle East, the King of Saudi Arabia was brought to attention. Before that, however, the memo first warned that in the Arab world, "doubt was...becoming more widespread in recent weeks that the Allies will not win the war". The potential collapse of the Anglo-French military alliance meant that the Allied position in the Middle East would come under greater threat from the Germans, Italians, colonial Vichy and internal Arab unrest. Making matters even worse, the Anglo-American wartime alliance was still in its infancy as the United States remained effectively neutral, which

¹¹¹ Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia- Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa'ud*, pp. 13-23.

¹¹² For a recent account on Ibn Saud's consolidation of power between 1902 and 1903, see, Madawi, Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 37-39, pp. 41-46, pp. 66-68.

¹¹³ For an insightful historical examination of Ibn Saud and Wahabbism through the eyes of British officialdom, see BL: IOR R/15/5/116. 'Ibn Saud', T.C. Fowle (Bushire) to JC Walton (The India Office) May 26, 1937.

¹¹⁴ Gertrude Bell, *The Arab War: Confidential Information for General Headquarters from Gertrude Bell* (Great Britain: Golden Cockerel Press, 1940) p.29.

seemed to rule out any chance of American armed forces coming to Britain's aid. For all of the strikes against the British strategic position in the Middle East, however, the report highlighted a major advantage: "Ibn Saud remains friendly to the Allies".¹¹⁵

Over the course of the Second World War and in the years afterward, Ibn Saud's loyalty to the Allied cause continued to be recognized by British and American officials. In his meeting with the Saudi Arabian king at Great Bitter Lake in February of 1945, President Roosevelt praised Ibn Saud: "At a time when we had hardly dreamt of victory...you kept the Arabs peaceful, when your hopes of Allied victory were slender. By associating yourself with us, you showed the Arabs the right road that God is one..."¹¹⁶ Like Roosevelt, in a similar sentimental vein, Churchill recalled: "My admiration for him (Ibn Saud) was deep because of his unfailing loyalty to us. He was always at his best in the darkest hours".¹¹⁷ Examining the record, what scholars have found is that belying the president and prime minister's rhetoric, Ibn Saud's allegiance to Britain and the United States although strong, was not necessarily preordained or exclusive.

The historians Donald Cameron Watt and Lucasz Hirszkowicz have detailed in full the growth of German-Saudi ties right up to the hostilities of September 1939. Both historians stress that the two countries shared a bond due to their sympathy for the Arab Rebellion in Palestine.¹¹⁸ In 1937, Ibn Saud had sent Saudi representatives to meet with German officials to discuss purchasing 15,000 rifles, but this transaction was likely less related to Palestine's struggle, and more to do with the King's lasting goal of establishing a modern Saudi Arabian army.¹¹⁹ At the same time, Berlin began pursuing an active German commercial presence in Saudi Arabia. Companies such as Krupp and Siemens competed directly with British and American firms for infrastructure contracts handed out by Riyadh to install water supply systems, electricity and

¹¹⁵ PRO: FO 371/24549. Memorandum by Coverly Price, May 16, 1940. Commenting further on the British position in the region, Price would add, "*This is our Battle of the Bulge in the Middle East*".

¹¹⁶ PRO: HW1/3610/142412. Copy of missive from the Turkish Legation in Cairo collected by the Foreign Office, March 16, 1945.

¹¹⁷ David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 71.

¹¹⁸ Donald Cameron Watt, 'The Foreign Policy of Ibn Saud 1936-1939' *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (April, 1963). Lucasz Hirszkowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). Uwe Pfullmann, ed. Wolfgang Schwanitz. 'German Saudi-Relations and their Actors, on the Arabian Peninsula, 1924-1939' *Germany and the Middle East 1871-1945* (Princeton: Markus Weiner, 2004 pp. 119-154. For more analysis on Nazi Germany's interest in the Middle East see, Andreas Hillgruber, (ed.) Uriel Dann 'The Third Reich and the Near and Middle East, 1933-1939', *The Great Powers in the Middle East, 1919-1939*, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988) pp. 274-282.

¹¹⁹ Hirszkowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, pp. 51-53.

telegraphs.¹²⁰ Fostering relations with Saudi Arabia from the perspective of Berlin was part of a Middle East strategy to ensure that in any future Anglo-German confrontation, Arab leaders like Ibn Saud would be either compelled to support the Axis position or at least take a position of neutrality.¹²¹

In January 1939, Germany became the first country not affiliated with the Hajj to install its own diplomatic representative in Jeddah. Minister Dr. Fritz Grohba's arrival was deemed by British officials in both Jeddah and London as "an anti-British move on the part of the German Government".¹²² In the opinion of Fritz Grohba, beneath Saudi Arabia's supposed friendship with Britain, something darker lurked, summed up by the Bedouin proverb: "Kiss your enemy, if you cannot kill him".¹²³ A German press report at the time of Grohba's visit hailed the dawn of Saudi-German accord:

*"A new era in the relations between Ibn Saud and Germany starts just at the moment when the Empire of Ibn Saud, thanks to the vast petrol and gold discoveries in the Arabian Peninsular (sic), is heading towards a period of economic progress to which Germany thanks to her ever closer relations with Arabia will contribute to the full extent of her powers".*¹²⁴

While Germany attempted to open up more channels with Saudi Arabia, the scholar Massimiliano Fiore claims that for years Italy had been "waging a war by proxy" against Britain's hegemonic standing in the Arabian Peninsula.¹²⁵ In his posture as "protector of Islam", the Arabian Peninsula held a special allure for Mussolini in his drive to creating a new "Roman

¹²⁰ PRO: FO 371/ 23268/ E 2928/161/25. 'Annual Report Economic in Saudi Arabia-1938' Bullard to Halifax, March 28, 1939.

¹²¹ PRO: FO 371 23268/ E 2928/161/25. 'Annual Report Economic in Saudi Arabia-1938' Bullard to Halifax, March 28, 1939.

¹²² PRO: FO 371/ 23272. Burkett to Sir John Reith, February 28, 1939. For further inquiry into the purpose of Fritz Grohba's work in Saudi Arabia, see, Edgar Flacker, *Fritz Grobba and Nazi Germany's Middle East Policy, 1933-1942* (London: University of London Press, 1998). Wolfgang Schwanitz, ed. Schwanitz "*The Jinnee and the Magic Bottle*" 'Fritz Grobba and German Middle East Policy 1900-1945', *Germany and the Middle East 1871-1945* (Princeton: Markus Weiner, 2004) pp. 87-118.

¹²³ Lacey, *The Desert Kingdom*, p. 79.

¹²⁴ PRO: FO 371/ 23272. Burkett to Sir John Reith, February 28, 1939.

¹²⁵ Massimiliano Fiore, *Anglo-Italian Relations in the Middle East, 1922-1940* (London: Ashgate, 2010) *précis*. For further studies focusing on Italian foreign policy in the Middle East before and During the Second World War, see Manuela L. Williams, *Mussolini's Propaganda Abroad: Subversion in the Mediterranean and the Middle East 1935-1940* (London: Routledge Press, 2006). Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East* (Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Empire.”¹²⁶ After the Abyssinian crisis of 1936, Italian and British lines of imperial communication came into greater conflict in the Red Sea.¹²⁷ What made British officialdom concerned was Ibn Saud’s pragmatic approach towards Italian imperialism. Having been one of the first countries to recognize the Italian annexation of Abyssinia, Saudi Arabia also exported foodstuffs, sheep and camels to Italy.¹²⁸ In the summer of 1939, Riyadh had received a shipment of Italian arms at a minimal rate, which they were allowed to pay for in nine instalments.¹²⁹ Fearing Italy’s growing influence, the British minister to Saudi Arabia, Reader Bullard, was frustrated that Italy was able to supply Saudi Arabia with over 80,000 pounds of materiel, at a time when London was making excuses to Ibn Saud that there was not a “...a chip of cartridges to spare”.¹³⁰

As much as these examples of German and Italian manoeuvring were alarming, it was Japan’s attempt to establish a diplomatic legation in Jeddah that redirected American policy towards Saudi Arabia. In the 1930s, a commercial relationship had slowly been developing between Saudi Arabia and Japan.¹³¹ As early as 1934, Japan had practically become the sole exporter of cotton piece goods in Saudi Arabia since Japanese items were fifty percent cheaper than British goods.¹³² In the spring and early summer of 1939, an official Japanese delegation went to Saudi Arabia with terms to purchase oil concessions that according to the American geologist, Karl Twitchell were “as tempting as they were fantastic”.¹³³ On June 30, 1939, Cordell Hull informed the president that the Japanese were looking for an oil concession agreement lasting a “period of sixty years covering practically all of Saudi Arabia”.¹³⁴ In Riyadh, Twitchell had advised Ibn Saud to turn down the Japanese offer, figuring it to be masking Japan’s true motives, which were to gain “territorial concessions” from Saudi Arabia. However, based on

¹²⁶ Speaking of the Anglo-Italian rivalry in the Middle East, Harold Eyres of the Foreign Office concluded, “*We must pin our hopes to the fact that the Arabs probably recognise that, bad as we are, the Italians would be worse.*” PRO: FO 371/24549 R# 2283/2029/66. Eyres Minute, July 16, 1940.

¹²⁷ BL: IOR R/15/5/122. ‘Italy, Iraq, Saudi Arabia’, Foreign Office to Bullard, April 27, 1939.

¹²⁸ Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, p. 52.

¹²⁹ PRO: CO 733/443/19. Reg. 2720/567/6. Bullard to Baggelay, November 7, 1939.

¹³⁰ PRO: FO 371/23271. Bullard to Baggelay, November 7, 1939 & War Office to Scott, November 28, 1939.

¹³¹ PRO: FO 371 23268. ‘Annual Report Economic 1938’ Sir Reader Bullard to Lord Halifax, December 10, 1938.

¹³² Hiroshi Shimizu, *Anglo-Japanese Trade Rivalry in the Middle East in the Inter-war Period* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986) p. 58.

¹³³ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1. Diary, May 3, 1941.

¹³⁴ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350, Row 55, Compartment 1, Shelf 02-3, Entry 2410 “Egypt Cairo Embassy 1936-1955” Box 4. Hull to Roosevelt, June 30, 1939.

local intelligence gathered by the British Foreign Office, it was known that Ibn Saud had demanded too high a price, and it was the Japanese who eventually rejected the transaction.¹³⁵

As if Japan's concession hunting and the role it played in the Saudi Arabian economy were not alarming enough, the fear that the Japanese were somehow working in-step with German and Italian interests raised serious concerns in Washington. In May 1939, director of CASOC, Patrick Lenahan, notified the American minister in Cairo, Judge Bert Fish, that coupled with Grohba's visit and the Italian propagandizing in Jeddah, the latest Japanese diplomatic overtures clearly indicated that "the Empire of the Sun" was "jointly working with the Germans and Italians".¹³⁶ Fish reported to the State Department that no less than Ibn Saud believed that the revisionist countries had territorial ambitions in Saudi Arabia.¹³⁷ Only five months earlier, the Japanese Minister to Egypt, Ohno, had half-jokingly remarked to the British Ambassador, Lord Killearn: "With Yemen under Italian Influence- the Hedjaz (Saudi Arabia) under German Influence, we will be able to check the French and British in the Red Sea".¹³⁸ Concerned about the potential dangers posed by the future Axis powers infiltrating the Arabian Peninsula, on July 26, 1939, the State Department decided to accredit the American minister to Egypt to Saudi Arabia as well. Once notified of the State Department's decision to make Minister Fish the first American diplomatic representative to Saudi Arabia, the president wrote to Cordell Hull, "*Excellent Idea-OK FDR*".¹³⁹

On June 17, 1939, a Saudi Arabian emissary named Khalid al-Wud Garghani had been granted a personal audience with the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. On one level, the meeting resulted in diplomatic success from the Saudi Arabian perspective. With regard to Ibn Saud's lasting determination to establish a standing Saudi Arabian army, the Reich offered Saudi Arabia a gift of 4000 rifles, 2000 cartridges for each piece and a future credit for arms valued up to 125,000 pounds.¹⁴⁰ Whether Ibn Saud was ready to fully commit his country to an alliance with Germany and turn against Britain is an entirely different matter. Saudi-German ties in this era

¹³⁵ PRO: FO 371 23268. Sir Reader Bullard to Lord Halifax "Annual Report Economic 1938" December 10, 1938.

¹³⁶ FRUS 1939. Vol. IV, *The Far East; the Near East and Africa*, GS Messersmith to Bert Fish, May 24, 1939, p. 824.

¹³⁷ FRUS 1939. Vol. IV, *The Far East; the Near East and Africa*, Fish to Hull, June 21, 1939, p. 826.

¹³⁸ PRO: FO 371 23272 /E 1129, 737/25. Lampson to Foreign Office, January 31, 1939.

¹³⁹ FRUS 1939. Vol. IV, *The Far East; the Near East and Africa*, Hull to Roosevelt, June 30, 1939, p. 828.

¹⁴⁰ Hirsizowicz *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, p. 52. & Gerhard Schreiber, Bernd Stegemann, Detlef Vogel, *Germany and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 172.

were a manifestation of one of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy priorities. Establishing diplomatic contacts with countries outside the yoke of British influence was a way for a new state like Saudi Arabia to assert its sovereignty, not only to itself, but also to rest of the world.

In its aftermath, the Garghani mission turned into a valuable source of intelligence for British officials. Garghani reports were shared with the British minister to Saudi Arabia, Reader Bullard. Although known afterwards for his pro-Axis sympathies, Garghani in a cable held that the German people showed a "secret dissatisfaction with the policy of their Government and its declaration of enmity towards England". If war was declared, German officials feared internal revolt against the Government.¹⁴¹ From this point forward Saudi Arabia distanced itself from the Reich. Once Britain declared war on Germany, Ibn Saud refused the establishment of a German legation in Jeddah, and would not let Grohba return to Saudi Arabian soil.¹⁴² Other factors weighing on Ibn Saud that summer might have been the fact that Lord Killearn had pressured Egyptian authorities to withhold the 750,000 dollars worth of Saudi Arabian money banked in Cairo if the king became an ally of Germany.¹⁴³

In the summer of 1940 when the fortunes of the Allies were at low ebb, events in Saudi Arabia were carefully watched. For instance, British Naval Intelligence kept a close monitor of all wireless communications between Riyadh and Germany. Because even though Ibn Saud's position was clearly pro-Ally, the British legation in Jeddah knew that some of his key advisors were not. It was believed that Al-Garghani and Fuad Hamza, the Saudi minister to Vichy, continued to be in contact with German officials.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, British agents working for the Bahrain Petroleum Company identified the German educated Salah Islam, the radio station announcer for the Saudi Arabian Government, as a local distributor of Axis propaganda.¹⁴⁵

In July 1940, the American Vice Consul in Cairo, Raymond Hare cabled Washington, going so far to say that Saudi Arabia had turned pro-Axis. Hare told his colleagues that an American informant who visited the Kingdom on behest of British Overseas Airways Corporation had "gained the impression that King Ibn Saud is pro- German in sympathy and that

¹⁴¹ PRO: FO 371 23272/ E5867/735/25. 'Khalid Abu'l Walid report from Berlin to Riyadh -July 20, 1939', Trott to Baxter, August 9, 1939.

¹⁴² BL: IOR R/15/5/116. 'Ibn Saud', Bullard to Halifax, September 19, 1939.

¹⁴³ NARA: RG 84 Row 55, Compartment 6, Shelf 05-6 Entry 2412, Box 1 "Egypt Cairo Embassy 1939-1947". Fish to State Department, July 19, 1939.

¹⁴⁴ BL: IOR R/15/2/561. 'Wireless Communication with Germany', Naval Message to P.R.P.G Bahrain from S.N.O.P.G, August 20, 1940.

¹⁴⁵ BL: IOR R/15/2/561. Memorandum by R.A. Kennedy, Chief Local Representative, The Bahrain Petroleum Company, August 26, 1940.

he might even enter the war against Great Britain”.¹⁴⁶ However, it was hard to question Ibn Saud’s allegiance after Saudi authorities worked alongside British officials to arrest St. John Philby, the King’s long time western advisor on August 25, 1940. This was a major coup for the new British minister to Saudi Arabia, Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, who had complained that Philby, for years the *bête noire* of the British establishment, had been “openly indulging in disloyal and defeatist talk in both Allied & Neutral company...”¹⁴⁷ Under restraint by Defence of India Rules Act, Philby was picked up in Karachi before he left for the United States on an Anti/British and pro-isolationist lecture tour.¹⁴⁸

At a time when the Allied grip on the Middle East was in the balance, regardless of earlier reports, London still considered Saudi Arabia to be a country friendly to British interests. In October 1940, British airbases in Habbaniya, oil installations in Mosul and Kirkuk and the Baghdad-Haifa road were being threatened by Arab nationalists with pro-Axis sympathies.¹⁴⁹ With this in mind, Lord Wavell, who as Commander-in-Chief of British forces in the Middle East, reasoned that the construction of the new Amman to Kuwait route would be safer if it went through Saudi Arabia rather than the 900 miles through unfriendly Iraqi hinterland. Wavell was backed by the British Ambassador to Iraq, Basil Newton, who also saw the advantages of Britain shifting its focus to Saudi Arabia when it came to regional strategy. “Ibn Saud,” said Newton, “fears the support which we at present give to Iraq...he must wish that some of the money which we have spent on the development of Iraq as now with the Baghdad-Haifa Road could have accrued to Saudi (Arabia)”.¹⁵⁰ That same month, London ordered Colonel Gerald De Gaury, an army specialist in Arab tribal related matters, to Riyadh to take stock of Ibn Saud’s views on the war. He came away with the sense that the King had no intention of re-orientating Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy in favour of the Axis. In fact, De Gaury requested to be withdrawn early from his mission after he found the King’s support for the Allied cause “entirely satisfactory”. He later briefed the American officials in Cairo, praising Ibn Saud as “absolutely first-class” and

¹⁴⁶ NARA: RG 84 Row 55, Compartment 6, Shelf 05-6, Entry 2412, 711.1-711.8 Box 2 ‘Egypt Cairo Embassy 1939-1947’. Hare to State Department, July 24, 1940.

¹⁴⁷ PRO: FO 371/24589 R # E 710/710/25. Stonehewer-Bird to FO, February 16, 1940.

¹⁴⁸ PRO: FO 371/24589 R 2306/710/25. India Office to the Secretary of State of India, August 25, 1940.

¹⁴⁹ Six months later, the pro-Axis coup of Rashid Ali of April 1, 1941 had been a bellwether moment, signalling that Iraqi support for British wartime strategy could no longer be considered *carte blanche*. See Daniel Silverfarb, *Britain’s Informal Empire in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press) pp.142-145.

¹⁵⁰ PRO: FO 371/24/547. Basil Newton to Lord Halifax, October 1, 1940.

“the perfect intelligence officer” with a firm eye on all local intrigues taking place in his Kingdom.¹⁵¹

Still, historians like David Howarth, put forward the argument that Ibn Saud acted less than heroically in the face of the Axis menace. “Even the least critical of his admirers,” states Howarth, “could not have found anything glorious in his conduct in Hitler’s war. He simply did nothing”.¹⁵² Robert Lacey takes a similar line asserting that that the king excelled as a statesman during the Second World War in his “advances towards Hitler and Mussolini, behind the back of his British and American friends”.¹⁵³ Yet, accepting Ibn Saud’s behavior during this time as self serving and disingenuous lacks subtlety and fails to take into account a number of issues. Firstly, the man in charge of Britain’s engagement with Saudi Arabia during the 1930s, George Rendell, strongly opposed such a notion. He observed years later that it was “misleading and mischievous” to say that Ibn Saud viewed Britain and the United States no differently than Nazi Germany and Mussolini’s Italy. In the case of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy, Rendell contended that “obviously any weak country (Saudi Arabia), jealous of its independence, will to some extent play off its potential enemies against each other”.¹⁵⁴

Secondly, Britain and later the United States perceived the underlying meaning behind Ibn Saud’s actions and saw it in a positive light. What will be discussed more fully in chapter II, the stance of neutrality taken by Ibn Saud was in actuality a form of “benevolent neutrality” which leaned heavily toward the wartime alliance rather than the Axis. Furthermore, if Ibn Saud had decided to fall into line and join the Allied cause as an ill-equipped belligerent, he would be perceived as an Allied stooge. He would lose all credibility with many of his co-religionists, the same people that British and American governments sought to influence through him. Under the banner of neutrality, however, Ibn Saud as one of the rare independent Arab leaders appeared resolute and influential. The King shrewdly understood the value of appearances. British and American officials used this awareness, and considered it to be of paramount importance in the battle of propaganda that was so critical during the Second World War.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ NARA: RG 59, Lot 57D 298, Box 15. Murray to Berle, Welles and Hull, October 30, 1941.

¹⁵² Howarth, *Desert King*, p. 199.

¹⁵³ Lacey, *Desert Kingdom*, p. 255.

¹⁵⁴ St. Antony’s Middle East Centre, Oxford (SAMEC): George Rendell Papers. GB 165-0238. Rendell to Bullard, June 19, 1957.

¹⁵⁵ For accounts on the Allied-Axis propaganda battle in the Middle East, see Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (United States: Sheridan Press, 2009). Manuela L. Williams, *Mussolini’s Propaganda Abroad*, 2006. Seth Arsenian, ‘Wartime Propaganda in the Middle East’ *Middle East Journal*, pp. 417-429.

Indeed, drawing Ibn Saud into the Anglo-American orbit was part of further engraving the distinctions between the friends of the Allies and their “pagan” Axis adversaries. Explaining how the King separated Saudi theocracy from the authoritarianism associated with fascism, Reader Bullard wrote to the Foreign Office: “To him (Ibn Saud) there is a fundamental difference between the theocracy of Saudi Arabia and the despotism, tempered neither by the fear of God nor readiness to listen to human advice, of a man like Hitler”.¹⁵⁶ Looking back to that fateful day, September 1, 1939, the Ministry of Information in London stressed the significance of Saudi Arabia in the conflict that lay ahead, or more precisely the influential reach of Ibn Saud:

*“The main lesson to be learnt from the experiences of 1914-1918 is the importance of gaining the sympathy and help of the Leaders in each region and working as far as possible through them. Arabia is as whole, still largely tribal and there is little enlightened and independent opinion amongst the masses. What Ibn Saud thinks, for instance, the rest of the Nejd and the Hejaz thinks too”.*¹⁵⁷

This point would be particularly relevant when it came to the Allies’ delicate position regarding Palestine. Despite the assurances provided by the British Government’s White Paper of 1939, an Allied victory ensured the creation of some form of a Jewish state in Palestine against the will of the local Arab majority. At this time, the German wireless station, *The Voice of Free-Arabism* reached Saudi Arabian listeners and gave full expression to Axis support for Arab nationalism and Arab aspirations in Palestine.¹⁵⁸ The British Legation became alarmed at the inroads that German propaganda had made with regard to the poorer segments of the Saudi Arabian population. Although in his recent study, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, Jeffrey Herf claims that Ibn Saud welcomed the content of Berlin’s message, the king’s personal intervention in muzzling the influential Ulema of Mecca, who were reported to be “solidly pro-German,” was greatly appreciated by British officials.¹⁵⁹ Six weeks after Britain declared war on

¹⁵⁶ PRO: FO 371/23269 / 2587/483/76. Bullard to Halifax, October 24, 1939.

¹⁵⁷ PRO: FO 371/23269 / 2587/483/76. Bullard to Halifax, October 24, 1939.

¹⁵⁸ In October 1940 Germany officially broadcasted its support for Arab nationalism by stating, “Germany has always sympathized with the Arab question and hoped that the Arabs will one day regain their position in the world which will honour their race and great history”. PRO: FO/371/24549/ R# 2317/2317/65. Foreign Office Memorandum, October 21, 1940.

¹⁵⁹ PRO: FO 371/35164 / E8085/549/25. ‘Jeddah Report’, Reader Bullard, November 1, 1939. Further commenting on the dangers of German Propaganda, Bullard stated in the same missive: “Hitler is anti-Jew, the Prophet Muhammad was anti- Jew and the raving of the German wireless against Jews must sound agreeably familiar to

Germany, Bullard reported to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, that “having taken up an attitude of neutrality so benevolent towards the Allies, it is natural that Ibn Saud should desire that Palestine should cease to be a cause of irritation to the Arab world”.¹⁶⁰ As an indication of things to come, Bullard’s words augur what would draw the wartime alliance further into the Kingdom’s affairs; transforming Ibn Saud’s influence and “benevolent neutrality” into a viable strategic asset.

Conclusion

This chapter’s aim has been to present the different approaches taken by Britain and the United States in their evolving relations with Ibn Saud before 1941. These histories are instructive for understanding how the wartime alliance carried out its policies towards Saudi Arabia in the years to come. Britain’s hegemonic rise in the Middle East ran parallel with Ibn Saud’s consolidation of his own power in the Arabian Peninsula. The lessons that can be drawn from this era are that unlike the British Government’s attitude towards other Arab states, it did not act in an imperious manner towards Ibn Saud. Instead, the prevailing trend observed in Anglo-Saudi relations can be considered the opposite; a strategic partnership noted for its mutual respect. British power indirectly facilitated and strengthened Ibn Saud’s rule, while the Saudi Arabian King’s moderate leadership contributed to the stability of *Pax Britannica*. Conversely, before the Second World War, on a formal level between governments, the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia had been minimal, but the contacts made with Ibn Saud by individual American nationals in the 1930s, such as Charles Crane and the oil company CASOC helped cement an association between the two nations.

When the Second World War arrived in 1939, Ibn Saud by virtue of his independent position appeared as the premier Arab leader. Indeed, the Allies and the Axis realized that the “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques” could be a major asset when it came to the propaganda war that was being waged between the two sides. Although Germany and Italy made a substantial bid to gain Ibn Saud’s friendship, in the critical early stages of the Second World War, the King decided to distance his kingdom from the enticements of the Axis. He realized

people brought up almost exclusively on the Quran”. For Ibn Saud’s attitude towards Nazi Propaganda, see Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*. p 34 & pp. 41-43.

¹⁶⁰ PRO: FO 371/23269 / 2587/483/76. Bullard to Halifax, October 24, 1939.

that Saudi Arabia could be a more influential presence in the region's dangerous political climate by remaining officially neutral, whilst at the same time tacitly siding with Britain and her allies. The advantageous exchange apparent in Anglo-Saudi relations, the unofficial, behind-the-scenes personal contact marking Saudi-American relations and Ibn Saud's position of "benevolent neutrality" towards the Allies, would all at once emerge in 1941 as key pillars of the early phase of Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter II

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia 1941

Introduction

In the spring of 1941, it can be said that Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia began in earnest. For months, British and American interests relating to the Kingdom converged as Axis influence in the Middle East grew in scale. From the perspective of British and American officials, Ibn Saud shared the allies' interest in keeping the Axis powers at bay. The weight given to Saudi Arabia in terms of allied strategy was, however, at odds with the country's anaemic economic state at the time. Wartime conditions had a crippling effect on the Saudi Arabian economy, undercutting the institution that generated the Kingdom's greatest source of income, the Hajj. "Since the rise of Islam", Philip Hitti noted, "the Hajj formed the principal link between Arabia and the other outer world". In 1941, this to a great extent still rang true in cultural, political and economic terms.¹⁶¹ Up to this point in history, the Hajj kept the Saudi Arabian Government solvent, but the dangers of wartime travel severely curtailed the pilgrimage, thereby shrinking the revenue raised from it. Unless Riyadh received financial aid to offset this situation, Ibn Saud's own authority could be undermined, and his position as an important regional ally could be lost. Moreover, if Britain or the United States did not act promptly, an even darker scenario might come to pass: the Axis powers would fill the void by coming to Saudi Arabia's aid.

When the White House and the State Department considered offering Lend-Lease aid to Saudi Arabia, it appeared logical to policymakers that the provision of subsidies to a country located in the heart of *Pax Britannica* would naturally need the logistical assistance of the British. When questions arose as to whether Lend Lease aid overstepped the wartime neutrality of both Saudi Arabia and the United States, British and American officials found indirect ways to effectively support Ibn Saud, which at this early stage in 1941 already showcased the interdependent workings of Anglo-American relations. The British Government came to the aid of the Roosevelt administration by offering a series of subsidies to Ibn Saud that politically Washington could not grant. The United States' official position of wartime neutrality made

¹⁶¹ Hitti, *The Arabs: A Short History*, p. 12.

American policy in Saudi Arabia non-committal. Thus, for their part achieving American policy aims was to a large extent left to the Foreign Office in London. Later in the autumn of 1941, the two allies however reversed roles. An American agricultural mission that was to be dispatched to Saudi Arabia was approved by Washington, a move that dovetailed neatly with the British policy aim of strengthening the Al-Saud regime. London saw the value of the United States becoming more actively involved in Saudi Arabia in order that the country would not be stigmatized as being a creature of British Imperialism. Additionally, in order to protect the Kingdom's wartime neutrality, it was far less contentious for a fellow neutral state such as the United States to set up a mission on Saudi Arabian soil than for a belligerent power such as Britain to do so.

Along with strategic interdependence playing a significant role in making Anglo-American cooperation a valuable commodity in Saudi Arabia, this chapter focuses on two other notable themes which illustrate how the wartime alliance's actions in that country evolved and functioned. The Second World War necessitated British and American policymakers to carefully involve themselves in Saudi Arabia, making sure not to undermine a major aspect of the Kingdom's strategic value in the form of its inestimable sovereign status. The last theme, which also runs as a red line throughout the rest of this thesis, pertains to the fact that wartime strategy had an overriding influence on Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. Thus, formerly separate British and American agendas in Saudi Arabia in 1941 merged into a shared Anglo-American approach, hinging on the desire to align Ibn Saud firmly within the Allied camp of nations.

The Hajj and the Wartime Economic Woes of Saudi Arabia

While Britain and the United States were drawn to Ibn Saud's independent leadership in the early years of the Second World War, the structural weakness of Saudi Arabia's economy jeopardized it. When the *New York Times* reported on Bert Fish's appointment as the first American minister to Saudi Arabia in 1939, the newspaper observed, "dates and Arab clocks" kept the country's economy afloat.¹⁶² Saudi Arabia had no industry, according to the scholar Michael Stoff, except for the "manufacture of ornamental swords and knives, rudimentary

¹⁶² *New York Times*. 'Fish to Be Envoy as Relations are Opened with Country', July 27, 1939.

leather making and some rug weaving”.¹⁶³ Furthermore, with virtually no agricultural sector, the Saudi Arabian government depended on acquiring cheap foodstuffs such as rice, wheat, sugar, tea and textiles from the country’s primary trading partner, the Government of India, which by extension meant the British Empire.¹⁶⁴ Nothing in Saudi Arabia resembled a financial system of a modern state. The historian Phillip Khoury claims that during this time “there was no real differentiation between public and private purses” although the Government had in place a poorly structured state exchequer, *bait-al-mal*. Speaking about the Kingdom’s finances, one British official wrote that Saudi Arabia was “not unlike the England of King Charles II, with the pleasing difference that the King does not have to ask parliament for money”.¹⁶⁵ Yet unlike the English king, who had the bankroll to live an extravagant life style, at the start of the Second World War, economic hardship marked Ibn Saud’s rule.

More than anything else, the annual Hajj balanced the books for the Saudi Arabian treasury. When Ibn Saud was still an Amir of the Nejd in the early 1920s, his annual revenue hovered near a total of 100,000 pounds. After he conquered the commercially rich Hedjaz territory where the Islamic Holy Cities were located, Ibn Saud’s wealth rose to between four to five million pounds. This substantial income boost gave the Al-Saud the economic clout to initiate a complicated system of patronage that helped incorporate its authority throughout the rest of the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁶⁶ On the back of revenues from the Hajj, tribal sheiks were subsidized with monies and gifts in return for their allegiance to the Al-Saud. According to Hafiz Wahba, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to London, Ibn Saud housed over 10,000 permanent guests in Riyadh during the 1930s, including chieftains, prisoners and Bedouins.¹⁶⁷

At the onset of the Second World War, the Hajj was now adversely affected by deteriorating travel conditions worldwide. Starting in 1939, Ibn Saud became deeply concerned over the damaging impact that German propaganda was having on the Hajj. German wireless stations broadcasted false claims that the British Government had forbidden Indians to make the

¹⁶³ Stoff, *Oil, War, and American Security*, p.41.

¹⁶⁴ Since the 1930s, technical products, such as motor equipment and radios, if they could be purchased by the Saudi Arabian government had mostly come from the United States. See, PRO: FO 371/35164 / E8085/549/25. ‘Jeddah Report’, Reader Bullard, November 1, 1939.

¹⁶⁵ BL: IOR R/15/2/295. Memorandum by Andrew Ryan (Jeddah) June 1932.

¹⁶⁶ Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (ed.) *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (United States: University of California Press, 1990) p. 237.

¹⁶⁷ Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 306.

pilgrimage because of an Allied quarantine set up in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.¹⁶⁸ The annual number of pilgrims making the journey to Mecca fell by 4/5th in the first two years of the war.¹⁶⁹ Being one of the nation's few generators of wealth, a now reduced Hajj meant that the Saudi Arabian Government had little foreign exchange at its disposal to purchase basic food imports. As one report from the British legation in Jeddah observed, the Hajj anchored the country's overall stability: "If there is no pilgrimage, the Hejaz starves and becomes even more discontented than usual".¹⁷⁰

With wartime conditions now making the passage to Mecca and Medina more problematic than ever, the Saudi Arabian Government faced another challenge. A severe drought, which began in 1939, was still affecting the entire Nejd region and the eastern part of the country.¹⁷¹ Local transport ground to a halt, while grazing pastures all but perished. Writing in his diary about the drought, H.R.P. Dickson, now the British Political Agent of Kuwait, reported that 200 miles south of Hail "...sheep and camels which have died of starvation are being regularly eaten by the hungry everywhere, though forbidden by religion".¹⁷² Having no modern state infrastructure, Saudi Arabia and its dispersed populations depended on a single supply route stretching 1000 miles of vast desert separating the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.¹⁷³ Taking in all these considerations, the Hajj helped to keep Saudi Arabia stable and by extension bolstered the Allied presence in the Middle East.

Before the British and American governments stepped in and began subsidizing Saudi Arabia, the American oil company CASOC had already acted. When hostilities broke out in the autumn of 1939, CASOC loaned the Saudi Arabian government \$1,500,000, followed by approximately \$4,000,000 in 1940, which constituted the country's annual budget. The loan provided by CASOC was to be repaid by the Saudi Arabian government through revenue accrued from future oil discoveries. As CASOC was still not ready to take full responsibility for subsidizing Saudi Arabia at this stage, the company went on to limit the total loan for 1941 to

¹⁶⁸ PRO: 371 23268 E 7398/98/25. 'Communique' published on September 11, 1939'. Indian Office to Baggelay, November 7, 1939.

¹⁶⁹ Vassiliev, *History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 323.

¹⁷⁰ PRO: FO 371 23268 E7573/98/25. Reader Bullard to FO, October, 1939.

¹⁷¹ PRO: FO 371/ 35147 E 469/62/25. Wikeley to FO, January 5, 1943.

¹⁷² SAMEC: H.R.P. Dickson Papers. Dickson Box 3 File 8, November 30, 1942.

¹⁷³ PRO: FO 371 31462 E 469/62/25. Wikeley to FO, January 5, 1943.

US\$3,500,000.¹⁷⁴ With the 1941 budget almost entirely composed of loans, from the Allies' vantage point, it might seem that this state of financial dependency would subsume Saudi Arabia and damage Ibn Saud's image as a self-reliant and sovereign leader. Such a scenario would have the correlative effect of undermining the king's capacity to play a substantial role in regional affairs.

However, as the Kingdom struggled financially, the British Government - the only body that possessed the institutional capacity to make a true difference at the time - came to the conclusion that the situation in Saudi Arabia needed to be effectively addressed. After meeting with one of Ibn Saud's closest advisors, Sheik Yussef Yassin, Gerald De Gaury gave a telling description to the Foreign Office of how the Saudi Arabian Government believed it could fix the country's financial problems by playing up the Kingdom's serviceability to the Allied cause. Spelling out what he believed to be Yassin's thought process, De Gaury wrote, "I believe that it is his (Yassin's) intention to plant in our minds something like the following idea":

*"Iraq is unreliable, the French are mismanaging things in Syria, Palestine is troublesome. The only strong man, Ibn Saud, the "friend of Britain" who can put this right and bring the Arab States into line, so that they can make a stand against our enemies is powerless because he has no modern army and insufficient money. If we give him 1 ½ million pounds a year and some modern equipment he would save the day for us when the time comes".*¹⁷⁵

Given this analysis, it is no surprise then that the size of the subsidy given by De Gaury covered the Saudi Arabian Government's deficit for the upcoming year.¹⁷⁶ In 1940, London offered 300,000 pounds sterling and more importantly 10,000,000 newly minted riyals at a face value close to \$3 million dollars.¹⁷⁷ Minting riyals was crucial in combating the currency hoarding that was taking place throughout Saudi Arabia at the time. As shown in the previous chapter, the experiences of the previous war in several respects served as a very similar model for Anglo-Saudi relations in the Second World War. With this historical precedent firmly established, British largesse in exchange for Ibn Saud's tacit sympathy for Allied interests was a

¹⁷⁴ PRO: FO 371 24588 E1570/252/25. De Gaury to Foreign Office, March 20, 1940.

¹⁷⁵ BL: IOR R/15/5/116. De Gaury to Trott, December 18, 1939.

¹⁷⁶ BL: IOR R/15/5/116. De Gaury to Trott, December 18, 1939.

¹⁷⁷ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. 'British Financial Assistance to King Ibn Saud' Memorandum of Conversation by Wallace Murray between Lloyd Hamilton, General Manager of the California Arabian Standard Oil Company and Paul Alling, June 3, 1941.

compelling *quid pro quo*. But in 1941, Saudi Arabia's budget would have a deficit of \$6,000,000, even with the combination of British funds and CASOC loans.¹⁷⁸ With this inimical economic situation having become a fact in the Kingdom, and Britain being under the strain of financing the costs of fighting a global war, the time had come for the United States Government to act decisively in Saudi Arabia.

US Involvement, Karl Twitchell and Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia

Surveying the strategic relationship that was budding between Britain and the United States in early 1941, David Reynolds writes that "the cords that bound the two countries were becoming thicker, more tangled and more secure".¹⁷⁹ In secret, over the course of two months stretching from January 29th to March 29th, British and American war planners convened in Washington to discuss strategic priorities and contingency plans relating to overall Allied strategy. These 'American-British Conversations' - also known as the ABC talks - had confirmed that by the spring of 1941 Anglo-American relations had fully become a global affair.¹⁸⁰ This by extension meant that in the fight to secure Allied standing in the Middle East the unfolding financial crisis in Saudi Arabia had transformed into an Anglo-American dilemma.

Yet, the historical narrative dealing with the earliest stages of wartime Anglo-American cooperation centring on 1941 has been mainly built on studies concentrating on the subject of Middle East oil.¹⁸¹ Barry Rubin, one of the few historians who have singularly focused on Anglo-American relations in the Kingdom at this juncture, claims that the impulse that drew the allies together was the fact that "London was trying to increase American political involvement in Saudi Arabia against the will of the State Department and the White House".¹⁸² Rubin's observations bring to mind a broader theme dealt with in the historiography of the wartime

¹⁷⁸ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry June 11, 1941.

¹⁷⁹ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, p. 182.

¹⁸⁰ For an overview of the ABC talks see Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington: Historical Division, U.S. Army, 1950) pp. 367-382. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, pp. 182-185.

¹⁸¹ Overall, little is said about the formation of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia in 1941 partly because most scholars begin their studies in 1943. For a semi-full account of this era, see- Davis, *Contesting Space*, pp. 58-63. Other works which cover the subject, include, Rubin, 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945', pp. 254-255. Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 323. Gardner, *Three Kings*, pp. 25-26. For studies in which Anglo-American relations is touched upon within works that focus on oil, see Anderson, *Aramco, the United States and Saudi Arabia*, pp. 29-34. Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 37-49.

¹⁸² Barry Rubin, 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia: 1941-1945', p. 254.

alliance; the underlying resentment felt by Americans over having to indirectly fight for Britain's imperial interests.¹⁸³

However, the argument that the State Department and the White House should allegedly have been completely opposed to involvement in Saudi Arabia is an unconvincing one. With regard to the former, the State Department did not have a singular stance, but rather held multiple strands of thinking given the institution's bifurcated structure. In fact, the officials who headed the NEA, which was responsible for American relations with Saudi Arabia, Wallace Murray - chief since 1929 - and his deputies Paul Alling and Gordon Merriam pressed for closer coordination with their British counterparts. Indeed, one sees at this early stage in the war that American policymakers matched British officials in terms of the weight that they attached to the argument that Ibn Saud was a crucial player for the Allied cause in the Middle East, thereby setting the stage for further exploring commonalities. In the spring of 1941, at time when the entire Allied position in the Middle East hung in the balance, speaking to the Assistant Secretary of State, Adolf Berle, Murray maintained that Britain and the United States had to act quickly and decisively in Saudi Arabia.¹⁸⁴

With regard to the White House's interest in joining Britain in subsidising Saudi Arabia in 1941, it had been American oilmen who worked outside of Wallace Murray's NEA that piqued the president's attention. The most notable one, James Andrew Moffett, was a well-known oil industry insider and a prominent New Dealer, who had also been a personal friend of Roosevelt for decades.¹⁸⁵ In April 1941, working on behalf of CASOC, Moffett appealed directly to the president for him to consider having the United States Government subsidize Ibn Saud's regime. If the Ibn Saud's regime collapsed due to Saudi Arabia's ongoing economic trouble, in Moffett's mind, such a scenario could mean that "perhaps the entire Arab world will be thrown into chaos".¹⁸⁶

Moffett also emphasized to Roosevelt the wider strategic implications that came with assisting the Arab leader. Such an approach meant that in the future, the United States and

¹⁸³ During the Second World War, American GI's famously referred to the British designed Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) as "Save England's Asian Colonies." See Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 1972.

¹⁸⁴ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Murray to Berle May 29, 1941.

¹⁸⁵ Moffett at the time was a trustee of the Roosevelt charity, Warm Springs Foundation. The two men had also worked closely together during the First World War when Moffett facilitated oil purchases for the Navy Department, in which Roosevelt was then Assistant Secretary of the Navy. See Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 38.

¹⁸⁶ FRUS 1941. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth, the Near East, Africa*, Moffett to Roosevelt, April 16, 1941, pp. 624-625.

Britain could count on the Saudi Arabian king with regard to the Palestine issue and obtain his influential political support for the creation of a post-war Jewish state. This came at a time when the American minister in Palestine, George Wadsworth, concluded that 4/5 of the Arab populace wished for an Axis victory, with Germany continuing to do everything in its power to exploit the schism.¹⁸⁷ On top of the concerns mentioned above, Moffett also stressed the fact that supplying Saudi Arabia with funds went hand in hand with protecting the American petroleum interests that were anchored in that country. With Lend Lease having been enacted a month earlier, Moffett pressed the president to use this existing legislation to offer a helping hand to the Saudi Arabian King on March 11, 1941.¹⁸⁸

However, it is the overlooked role of another American, Karl Twitchell, who was at this point working outside of the State Department, which should be studied more closely when analysing the early years of Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia. Being the geologist who once led Charles Crane's survey of the Hejaz, Twitchell was one of the early American pioneers to settle in Saudi Arabia.¹⁸⁹ By 1941, he worked as a consultant for the American Smelting and Refining Company (formerly known as the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate), a company owned by both American and British business interests.¹⁹⁰ At this stage, Twitchell can be best described as a quasi-official of the American government, who - like J.A. Moffett - was able to jump back and forth between government and the private sector, thereby blurring the line between his personal business interests and what was in the national interest of the United States.¹⁹¹

The contributions that Twitchell would make in terms of facilitating Anglo-American cooperation were based on him having become a fixture of the expatriate community in Jeddah during the decade preceding the war.¹⁹² During this time he had also gained the trust of Saudi Arabian officials through his privileged relationship with Ibn Saud.¹⁹³ Whether it was true or

¹⁸⁷ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. 'Arab Attitudes to the War'. Memorandum by Wallace Murray sent to Berle, Welles and Hull. June 16, 1941.

¹⁸⁸ *New York Times*, 'Oil: the Smell of Scandal', May 5, 1947.

¹⁸⁹ Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹⁰ Karl Twitchell had first met Charles Crane in 1927 after being introduced to him by the United States consul in Aden. See Schwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers* (London: Atlantic Press, 1955) p. 288.

¹⁹¹ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Murray to Feis. June 13, 1941.

¹⁹² Working as a cartographer, Twitchell had also made a name for himself mapping out the city's harbour. Following the publication of his findings, the buoys floating on the Jeddah waterfront were to be known as "Twitchells." See, author's interview with Clarence J. McIntosh. January 30, 2006.

¹⁹³ Toby Jones is one historian who gives a significant amount of credit to Twitchell for being an "important political actor in the early making of Saudi political authority" in his life-long work "encouraging the development

not, Twitchell had often been told by the King that he was not considered a “foreigner”.¹⁹⁴ What’s more, Twitchell’s interaction with Ibn Saud’s inner circle served him well in his dealings with members of the British legation in Jeddah. He had become a close confidant of the British minister to Saudi Arabia in 1941, Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, as well as Gerald De Gaury and Brigadier General Stephen Longrigg.¹⁹⁵ Speaking of Stonehewer-Bird, Twitchell would write in his diary: “If all English abroad were like him there would be no-anti British feeling”.¹⁹⁶ Likewise, his British counterparts considered him to be a rare American, who was truly knowledgeable in the affairs of the Saudi Arabian government. Given his breadth of experience, Twitchell proceeded to become a leading “point man” for the United States government, and in the process, he helped to transform Saudi Arabia into an Anglo-American issue.

In Karl Twitchell’s mind, the time had come for Washington to follow Britain’s example and offer support to Ibn Saud. Having returned to the United States in May 1941, Twitchell in the coming months would use his own version of shuttle diplomacy to make the case that the United States should follow Britain’s lead by supporting the Arab king. Travelling from his home in Long Island to Washington, Twitchell on his own accord met with the Lend-Lease supporter, Senator Warren Austin, the Vice-President Henry Wallace and Henry Field, the famed “Anthropologist to the President,” all well-known personalities whom he felt could rally the American government’s support behind the Kingdom.¹⁹⁷ It was Field, who told Twitchell at a luncheon that same month that Roosevelt had personally expressed a great interest in the current situation in Saudi Arabia.¹⁹⁸

On May 14, 1941, Twitchell – still acting as a private citizen – met with Gordon Merriam, a State Department official working at the NEA, who would go on to cover Saudi Arabia throughout the Second World War. They discussed the ongoing political trouble in the

*of its (Saudi Arabia’s) natural resources”. See, Jones, *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia*, p. 49 & p. 53.*

¹⁹⁴ Seeley Mudd Library (SML): Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry August 16, 1942.

¹⁹⁵ Stephen Longrigg was also a British oil executive who while working for the Iraqi Petroleum Company had unsuccessfully bid for Saudi Arabian oil concessions in 1933 that were later won by ARAMCO. See Leatherdale, *The Imperial Oasis*, p. 200.

¹⁹⁶ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May 7, 1942.

¹⁹⁷ Twitchell was close friends with the influential Warren Austin as they both came from Vermont. For background information on Warren Austin, see George Mazuzan, *Warren Austin at the UN: 1946-1953* (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977). Henry Field at the time was one of America’s premier anthropologist who worked with the Roosevelt administration on project “M”, a scheme involving the issue of wartime refugees and post-war migration. See FDRL: Henry Field Papers or Henry Field, *Arabian Desert Tales between the Two Great Wars* (Sante Fe: Synergetic Press, 1976).

¹⁹⁸ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May19, 1941.

Middle East, and the two men were in agreement about “the present importance of keeping King Ibn Saud pro-British or at least neutral”.¹⁹⁹ That month, British forces alongside Pasha Glubb’s Arab Legion were fighting in Iraq to stamp out a pro-Axis coup led by the Arab nationalist Rashid Ali- Gaylani.²⁰⁰ At the same time, on a wider scale, the entire British position in the region was under further duress after Erwin Rommel’s Afrika Korps had pushed British forces out of Libya and were preparing to invade Egypt.²⁰¹

Considering options that would help ease the strained British war effort in the Middle East, Twitchell put forward an idea to the effect that the United States government should bankroll Ibn Saud, which would provide a degree of additional insurance as regards preserving the king’s friendly attitude toward the Allies. At first, Twitchell proposed granting a subsidy to an excess of 10,000,000 gold dollars to Saudi Arabia along with funds for an agricultural mission that would be organized by the State Department.²⁰² The idea of an agricultural mission originated from Ibn Saud himself, who had discussed the issue personally with Twitchell back in August 1940.²⁰³ For the time being, Twitchell saw the mission clearly in terms of wartime strategy, believing that it “might be very beneficial in terms of nullifying German efforts” in Saudi Arabia, while providing further proof to Arab peoples of Allied beneficence.²⁰⁴

The week preceding Merriam’s request for a second meeting with Twitchell on May 26, 1941 was a contentious one in Anglo-American relations. Negotiations over the terms of the Lend-Lease programme had gone poorly as the iconoclastic style of John Maynard Keynes - representing the views of the British Treasury - had not meshed well with that of his American colleagues.²⁰⁵ Against this testy political backdrop, although the State Department was “favourable” to some type of loan being offered to Saudi Arabia, Merriam let Twitchell know that it would be politically advantageous if “the British should increase their subsidy showing

¹⁹⁹ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May 14, 1941.

²⁰⁰ For an in-depth first- hand account on the Anglo-Iraqi War of 1941, see British Documents on Foreign Affairs (BDFA). Malcolm Yapp (ed.) Vol. IV *Near East and Middle East*, Cornwallis to Eden, June 6, 1941, pp. 453-463. For secondary literature, see Jackson, *British Empire and the Second World War*, p. 149. & Peter Wein, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarianism, Totalitarianism and Pro Fascist Inclination, 1932-1941* (Britain: Routledge, 2009).

²⁰¹ See- Laila Amin Morsy, ‘Britain’s Wartime Policy in Egypt, 1940-1942’ *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (January, 1989) pp. 73-75 & John North, “Lessons of the North African Campaign” *Military Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Autumn, 1944) pp. 161-168.

²⁰² SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May 13, 1941.

²⁰³ FDRPL: Franklin Roosevelt Papers. PPF 8452, ‘Report of the U.S. Agricultural Mission to Saudi Arabia’. Twitchell to FDR, April 23, 1943.

²⁰⁴ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, May 19, 1941.

²⁰⁵ See Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes, Vol. 3: Fighting for Freedom, 1937-1946* (United States: Viking, 2001).

evidence of concern before USA govt. would make loan”.²⁰⁶ Such a move would hush those American critics who felt that London was mischievously drawing the United States into another one of Britain’s “imperial” problems.

On the next day, May 27, 1941, Twitchell, now with the backing of the State Department, made a visit to the British Embassy. He knew first hand that logistically speaking the only way that American assistance to Saudi Arabia could be put into effect was by working in collaboration with British authorities. Neville Butler, the British Counsellor, gave Twitchell a warm welcome. On this occasion, Butler found an American who virtually echoed his own sentiments. Twitchell told him that “Ibn Saud was leader of 200,000,000 Moslems and 80,000,000 being in India...”, and if this mass of people stretching from the Maghreb to China “...turned pro-Axis they could do immense harm”.²⁰⁷ Attesting to this evidence, the recent Iraqi revolt, thought to be the handiwork of a pro-Axis underground that operated in the country, had still been fresh in everyone’s mind. Considering the troubles experienced by the Allies in the Middle East, the provision of additional aid for Ibn Saud was considered vital.

But even in the face of these compelling reasons for providing aid, Butler insisted that Twitchell should further justify why Ibn Saud sought out these “simple presents”. Providing the king with direct financial aid, Twitchell argued, would allow for “regular government (Saudi Arabian Government) maintenance” and the extra amounts of cash would “keep down any internal disturbance fomented by Germans, plus policing Transjordan, Irak, Kuwait frontiers and Yemen borders where the Italians were working hard to make trouble between Imam Yahia and Ibn Saud”.²⁰⁸ Rapidly gaining confidence in his role as a pseudo-diplomat, Twitchell tactfully, but forcibly, presented his request to Butler. If the United States Government was to issue a loan and fund an agricultural mission, the pertinent question was whether the British Government would augment their own subsidy, an act that would show American sceptics why it was important to help a far-off kingdom in the Arabian Peninsula. Butler listened and gave his word that he would forward a message to the Foreign Office explaining the American request. To show good faith, Butler would go on to share the content of the cable with Gordon Merriam at the State Department.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May 26, 1941.

²⁰⁷ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May 27, 1941.

²⁰⁸ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry, May 27, 1941.

²⁰⁹ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry, May 27, 1941.

British and American Efforts to Aid Saudi Arabia: June to September 1941

Efforts to expand American aid to Saudi Arabia continued to move forward in the summer of 1941. In Jeddah, the British minister Hugh Stonehewer-Bird was pleased to see the United States' new focus on the Kingdom, knowing that an American intervention would alleviate the tension of Ibn Saud being solely dependent on British handouts.²¹⁰ In this respect, the United States had an opportunity to play a pivotal part serving as a buffer between *Pax Saudia* and *Pax Britannica*. The entry of the United States onto the Saudi Arabian political stage from Stonehewer-Bird's perspective created a win-win game for all three parties involved. The United States could build up its association with Ibn Saud, while from London's view, greater American involvement helped to dispel concerns in the Arab world that Britain harboured unilateral imperialist designs on the Kingdom. Meanwhile, by diversifying its relations with another power such as the United States, Saudi Arabia could keep its pretences of sovereignty and independence on which its legitimacy rested. On June 4, 1941, Stonehewer-Bird informed Lloyd Hamilton of CASOC that London was committed to lending Ibn Saud an extra 200,000 pounds in the upcoming year.²¹¹

Back in Washington, a week later, on June 11, 1941, Twitchell met with James Moffett. According to Twitchell's diary, Moffett claimed that Harry Hopkins told him that a decision from the White House on Saudi Arabia would come in "48 hours", and that he "could short circuit and rush this matter as the president said go ahead". The American aid, according to Hopkins, would likely consist of an estimated cash loan of \$4 million, with US\$2 million earmarked for goods and equipment and \$50,000 a year for the cost of the Agricultural mission.²¹² At the end of two days, Moffett still had no news from the White House, but even a week later, Moffett was still confident enough to insist to his colleagues that the president had given the "green light". He had been told that Jesse Jones, the Secretary of Commerce and Federal Loan Administrator, was pushing it through the bureaucratic machine.²¹³

²¹⁰ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 79.

²¹¹ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Murray to Hull & Berle, May 29, 1941. SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, June 4, 1941.

²¹² SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, June 11, 1941.

²¹³ FRUS 1941. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth, the Near East, Africa* Memorandum by Paul Alling, June 18, 1941, p. 638.

Later that June, Alexander Kirk, whose duties as United States minister in Egypt also covered Saudi Arabia, received a formal request from Riyadh for American assistance. In his cable to the State Department, Kirk urged greater American action, stating that “the importance of insuring the sympathy of the Arab world at this time cannot be too strongly emphasized and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the logical field for American endeavour in that regard”.²¹⁴ The Saudi Arabian question reached a crescendo, on July 1, 1941, when the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord Halifax, who was accompanied by Neville Butler, met to exchange views with Cordell Hull. During their discussion, Hull made the suggestion that Britain should increase its financial assistance to Ibn Saud upfront, while the State Department would quietly support the Kingdom behind the scenes. In considering Hull’s plan, Halifax knew that having the United States Government intervening in the affairs of Saudi Arabia - no matter how little – served as a stepping stone towards London’s larger objective of loosening Washington’s neutrality until British and American wartime foreign policies would speak with one clear Allied voice. Indeed, Lord Halifax went as far as to suggest to Hull that any financial assistance given to Ibn Saud should be equally shared, an early harbinger to the 1944 Anglo-American Agreement, which constituted *the* highpoint of London and Washington’s collaboration in Saudi Arabia.²¹⁵

A day after the discussion between Hull and Halifax, Neville Butler had a face-to-face meeting with Wallace Murray to discuss in further detail arrangements to assist the Kingdom. Butler informed his American colleague that British authorities in India were prepared to mint ten million coined riyals worth 1.58 million pounds that would be allocated for the Saudi Arabian Government. He needed to show Murray that this policy was “further evidence of the desire of the British Government to assist the King”.²¹⁶ Recognizing the troubles stemming from the issue of neutrality Butler advised that it might be in Washington’s best interest to purchase Saudi Arabian petroleum in order to raise the Kingdom’s revenue, rather than going ahead with the politically contentious policy of doling out subsidies or loans.²¹⁷ On that score, Butler’s recommendation is further evidence that wartime exigency trumped any concerns held by the

²¹⁴ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Kirk to Secretary of State, June 26, 1941.

²¹⁵ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Memorandum of Conversation, Halifax, Butler & Hull, July 1, 1941.

²¹⁶ FRUS 1941. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth, the Near East, Africa*, Butler to Murray, July 2, 1941, pp. 639-640.

²¹⁷ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Murray to Berle & Hull, May 29, 1941.

United States Government in terms of getting more tangibly involved in the Saudi Arabian oil business. However, no matter how small it may have been in scale, the United States purchasing oil was still deemed politically as well as practically unfeasible due to the fact that the oil near Dhahran contained too much sulphur for American warships and aircraft.²¹⁸ Nevertheless, Butler trusted that the United States Government would still “see its way clear and offer financial assistance to Saudi Arabia putting aside the issue of neutrality”.²¹⁹ The stakes were too great for Britain or the United States to think that the problems in Saudi Arabia could be cordoned off from the rest of the region. It was time, Butler implored, for the State Department to show that Ibn Saud did not just have British friends, but that the King “could also count on his American friends across the Atlantic.”²²⁰

However, the Americans were now guilty of dragging their feet on configuring a policy that would help Ibn Saud’s besieged regime. The reason for this had to do with the United States’ fragile position of neutrality. No matter how clearly American policy supported Britain, as David Reynolds has noted, the United States was still at “war in masquerade” against the Axis.²²¹ Maintaining the illusion of wartime neutrality to combat isolationist critics at home bled into all facets of American policymaking.²²² This was why on July 18, 1941, President Roosevelt concluded that coming to the aid of Saudi Arabia “...was a little far afield for us!”, and hoped that instead, the British would continue to “take care of the King”.²²³ Running alongside the Saudi Arabian question, the act of keeping the United States neutral was such a political force that the following month Congress was able to re-enact the Selective Service Act by a slim margin of only one vote.²²⁴ How would the State Department convince those on Capitol Hill of Saudi Arabia’s linkage to American national security, when many of these Congressmen and

²¹⁸ FRUS 1941. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth, the Near East, Africa*, Secretary of Navy, Frank Knox to Roosevelt, May 20, 1941, pp. 635-636.

²¹⁹ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. ‘Financial Assistance for King Ibn Saud’. Memorandum of Conversation, Murray & Neville Butler, July 2, 1941.

²²⁰ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. ‘Financial Assistance for King’. Memorandum of Conversation, Murray, Butler and Alling, July 29, 1941.

²²¹ Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Wartime Alliance*, p. 195. Or see chapter 8 ‘War in Masquerade’ pp. 195-222.

²²² For one of the best studies on Roosevelt’s handling of American neutrality, isolationism and public opinion in American politics during the Second World War, see Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Germany* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001).

²²³ FRUS 1941. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth, the Near East, Africa*, FDR to Jones, July 18, 1941, p 643.

²²⁴ Alan P. Dobson ‘The Export White Paper, 10 September, 1941’ *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series Vol. 39, No. 1 (1986) p. 59.

Senators fought tooth and nail against Lend-Lease appropriations for Britain, a country that was arguably fighting the United States' war?

Hemmed in by the political obstacles of trying to conceal the country's growing involvement in the Second World War, on August 22, 1941, it was finally made official that Lend-lease aid for Saudi Arabia would not be granted.²²⁵ The scholar Lloyd C. Gardner has gone to great lengths to show that Washington sought to use Lend-Lease as a diplomatic weapon in the Kingdom. He refers to it as a "wedge" built specifically to separate Ibn Saud from the existing British sphere of influence.²²⁶ Simon Davis makes a similar point stating that in the midst of debating whether to provide aid to Saudi Arabia or not, the United States' relationship with Britain grew into a sense of "emerging American unease".²²⁷ Such assessments once again underplay the show of mutual Anglo-American cooperation, which infused the issue from the beginning, while disregarding the overriding political factors that eventually scuppered the plans to make Lend-Lease available in Saudi Arabia.

Karl Twitchell, the man on the American side who had advocated so forcefully for Ibn Saud, was given a murky explanation for the administration's decision to turn down aid for Saudi Arabia. He was told by Paul Alling that - along with the concerns related to preserving American neutrality - the president and Secretary Hull had agreed that the Kingdom had not been integral in the same way that American interests were in the cases of China and Latin America.²²⁸ On one level, Hull's argument rang true given that China was at war against Japan and in light of the geographic proximity of Latin America to the United States. But once examined more carefully, the Secretary of State remained sceptical of British motives. As Warren Kimball once remarked, "Hull never accepted the fact that Britain could be short of dollars while still operating a vast colonial and economic empire".²²⁹ Sceptical of the imperial gloss of British policy, Hull therefore played his part in advising the president that direct American aid for Saudi Arabia was unnecessary and should remain a province of Britain.

²²⁵ FRUS 1941. Vol. III *The British Commonwealth, the Near East, Africa*, Hull to Kirk, August 22, 1941, pp. 645-646.

²²⁶ Gardner, *Three Kings*, pp. 26-34.

²²⁷ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 58.

²²⁸ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry September 18, 1941.

²²⁹ Warren F. Kimball, 'Lend Lease and the Open Door: The Temptation of British Opulence, 1937-1942' p. 242.

With Lend-Lease aid for Saudi Arabia being deemed politically unworkable, Karl Twitchell felt for his part that the “requirements of King Ibn Saud should be given to him by the British Government out of the \$425 million loan being made to Britain by USA”. Using British agency worked as an effective diplomatic tool, helping to streamline American policy in Saudi Arabia. Foremost, the recurrent issue of aid for Saudi Arabia running against American neutrality would turn into a moot point. Secondly, from a pragmatic point of view, it made practical sense for the United States to play a role behind the scenes, especially in areas in which the United States Government lacked experience. “The British”, Wallace Murray observed in August 1941, “have a long background in the field of political loans, and are used to advancing money without any great expectations of getting it back, whereas the United States does not have any tradition of this sort”.²³⁰ Consequently, an Anglo-American arrangement arose in which Britain - a country that had liquidated 1.5 billion dollars of her overseas assets during 1940-1941 – would be overseeing the task of supplying subsidies to the financially depleted Kingdom.²³¹

The negative side of relying on Britain from the American perspective was that London might use their own Lend-Lease aid as a springboard to topple U.S. oil interests in Saudi Arabia. Many American oilmen, including Lloyd Hamilton, general manager of CASOC, believed it to be naive to think that Britain’s future policy towards the Kingdom emanated only from wartime emergency. Already, the British Government held no qualms as regards to using its political influence to protect a range of national investments within Saudi Arabia, most notably Gellatly Hankey, the premier shipping company, but also the American Smelting and Refining Company in which Britons held a substantial financial stake.²³² At any rate, a day before Washington’s rejection of Saudi Arabian aid came to light, the British Government delivered the Eden White Paper, virtually a binding Anglo-American agreement, which gave assurances that: “HMG have (has) not applied and will not apply any Lend-Lease materials in such a way as to enable their

²³⁰ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. ‘Financial Assistance to Saudi Arabia’. Memorandum of Conversation – Murray and Jernegan to Fred Davies, Lloyd Hamilton (Standard Oil Company of California) August 7, 1941.

²³¹ William L. Langer & S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War: 1940-1941* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953) p. 214.

²³² NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. ‘British Financial Assistance to King Ibn Saud’. Memorandum of Conversation, Paul Alling to Lloyd Hamilton (General Manager of the California Arabian Standard Oil Company) June 3, 1941.

exporters to enter new markets or to extend their export trade at the expense of the United States”.²³³

In the end, American officials who dealt with Saudi Arabia continued to be of two minds. For instance, from one angle, it was critical that Ibn Saud receive immediate financial assistance. But from another perspective, if Britain solely took charge of subsidization, would American interests in Saudi Arabia suffer as a result? An awkward situation might arise in which Britain - on the back of American largesse no less - would be the beneficiary of a disproportionate amount of credit for assisting the beleaguered Arab country. Therefore, direct British assistance needed to be followed by a show of American commitment to Saudi Arabia. Should this fail to materialise, Karl Twitchell forewarned that American prestige inside the Kingdom would end up being worth “nil”.²³⁴

The United States Agricultural Mission to Saudi Arabia

In September of 1941, recent Axis successes on the battlefield put Saudi Arabia back into the strategic spotlight. The Germans’ “Kiev” offensive had raised the spectre of a Russian military collapse, and with the Third Reich pushing eastward, the British historian Ashley Jackson has commented that during this touch –and –go period, “Britain’s Middle Eastern strategic jigsaw appeared to be threatened”.²³⁵ After hearing about Allied reversals, Karl Twitchell wrote in his diary that this turn of events gave the Axis a greater hand in forcing Ibn Saud to declare “jihad and stir up Moslems to make trouble in India and Egypt”.²³⁶ Britain’s commitment to subsidizing Ibn Saud was effective for the time being, but the United States’ refusal of Lend-Lease terms necessitated some sort of display of commitment to win back the king’s trust. Thinking of countermeasures that “may offset or neutralize” Saudi Arabian disappointment,” Twitchell returned to a key part of his original scheme, stating that: “...everything should be done to make a firm offer of a (agricultural) mission”.²³⁷ That summer, the United States Government were also planning to send missions to the Iranian Government as

²³³ Alan Dobson, ‘The Export White Paper, 10 September, 1941’ *Economic History Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Feb., 1986) p. 59.

²³⁴ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry June 4, 1941.

²³⁵ Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and Second World War* (London: Hambledon, 2006) p. 157.

²³⁶ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry September 19, 1941.

²³⁷ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry September 18, 1941.

well as the Kingdom of Afghanistan in a bid to reduce Axis influence in those countries.²³⁸ Keeping in mind these wartime considerations, the NEA's Paul Alling agreed with Twitchell. Writing to his superior Sumner Welles, Alling argued that during this difficult period of Allied losses, it was vital to "overcome any feeling he [Ibn Saud] may have that we are abandoning him completely". An agricultural mission organized and led by American officials was believed to be one step in the right direction towards repairing frayed feelings between the allies over the Lend-Lease rebuff.²³⁹

What is important to grasp is that the new proposal for sponsoring an agricultural mission complemented the British subsidization policy, while also having a higher purpose. The mission needed to be an extension of the State Department's desire to foster closer Saudi Arabian ties after the loan debacle.²⁴⁰ Speaking of the agricultural mission's goal, Adolf Berle wrote to Karl Twitchell:

*"The (State) Department is convinced that the personal relationships which the Mission's personnel establish with SA officials and individuals in civil life can play an important part in the success which the Department sincerely trusts will attend the Mission's work, and believes that these relationships should be carefully cultivated".*²⁴¹

After acquiring the influential support of Berle, the agricultural mission began to take shape. On September 18, 1941 in Washington, Karl Twitchell met with a group of American officials from the agricultural sectors of the government, which included members of the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Office of Foreign Agriculture Relations, Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Plant Industry. A consensus had been reached between these bodies that appropriations for such a venture could be covered under the umbrella of "Emergency Funds Available for the President". Backed by presidential approval, the

²³⁸ The agricultural mission was part of the Millspaugh Mission. See James Arthur Thorpe, *The Second Millspaugh Mission to Iran: 1943-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1966). For information relating to Afghanistan see, Georgetown University, Lauinger Library (LL): Cornelius Van Engels Papers, Box 9, Folder 22. 'Afghanistan' circulated by NEA's Paul Alling, August 8, 1944.

²³⁹ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs, 1941-1954. Alling to Welles, September 27, 1941.

²⁴⁰ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54, D 403, Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1941 1954. Memorandum of Conversation: 'Proposed mission to Saudi Arabia of Governmental Experts on Water Resources, Agriculture and Roads'. Memorandum of Conversation, Twitchell, Alling & Merriam, September 18, 1941.

²⁴¹ NARA: RG 250 Lot File No. 78, 49/32/05 Entry 1435, Box 1, Record of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs. Berle to Twitchell March 19, 1942. Also see Jonathan Schwartz, *Liberal: Adolph Berle and the Vision of an American Era* (United States: Free Press, 1987).

Department of Agriculture was granted fifty thousand dollars, and Twitchell in return for his efforts was given the important task of supervising the mission.²⁴²

The project, located fifty eight miles south from Riyadh in Al Kharj, amounted to three American officials teaching Saudi Arabians to grow staple crops like dates, wheat, alfalfa and green vegetables.²⁴³ In addition, Twitchell's team would help form the Al-Saud regime's own agricultural department in which American advisors would work with their Saudi Arabian counterparts on such skills as animal husbandry, irrigation practices, and even basket weaving and photography.²⁴⁴ In this respect, the agricultural mission addressed an immediate wartime predicament. If Saudi Arabia could be agriculturally self-sufficient, valuable wartime shipping space that was normally taken up by food-stuff imports sent to Saudi Arabia would be made available.²⁴⁵ The agricultural mission further accomplished its goal of agitating the Axis powers. Italy's propaganda machine in the Middle East, *Radio Badi*, claimed that the Americans wanted to attain more influence over Ibn Saud than the British, while wireless reports from Berlin reminded Arab listeners that the "Mission was sent by President Roosevelt who is maintained in power by Jewish Capitalists".²⁴⁶ With the exception of materials from the United States being sporadically delayed as well as Twitchell's deputy, F.G. Hamilton, contracting a bad case of malaria, the American Agricultural mission was overall deemed a diplomatic success.²⁴⁷

From the vantage point of Anglo-American relations, British officials in Washington were pleased by the prospect of an agricultural mission. Hugh Stonehewer Bird had relayed a

²⁴² NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350, Row 55, Compartment 7, Shelf 01, Entry 2415, Box 2. Welles to Kirk, March 21, 1942.

²⁴³ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350, Row 55, Compartment 7, Shelf 01, Entry 2415, Box 2. Memorandum of Conversation – Cairo to State Department, May 10, 1942. From the American Legation in Cairo Travelling to Saudi Arabia, Twitchell's team had to make a circuitous journey due to the wartime conditions. They travelled from Washington DC stopping en route in Miami, Trinidad, Brazil, Liberia, Gold Coast, Nigeria, Khartoum, and Cairo. See SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry March 17, 1942.

²⁴⁴ NARA: Microfilm LM 165, T 1179 Reel 7. 'Agricultural Invoices', April, 1942.

²⁴⁵ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350, Row 55, Compartment 7, Shelf 01, Entry 2415 Box 2. Cairo to State Department, May 10, 1942.

²⁴⁶ The German broadcast was translated by an Arab interpreter who worked for CASOC, Mohammed Al Mani. See SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entries August 15, 1942 & June 15, 1942.

²⁴⁷ In a macabre episode, Hamilton in a malaria induced state killed, cooked and eat a pet gazelle of a Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate Employee, E. Burke Smith, writing to the Secretary of Agriculture remarked on the poor American behaviour in Saudi Arabia: "*One of the objects, I believe of the American Agricultural Mission was to promote good will between the United States and Saudi Arabia yet such acts as this are looked upon by the Arabs, whose Koran teaches them to be kind to animals, as just another evidence of the calibre of us Christian dogs... Your man Hamilton has succeeded in losing the respect of the local people which only reflects upon our country in general and the American Agricultural Mission in particular.*" See NARA: Microfilm LM 165, T 1179 Reel 7. E. Burke Smith to Claude Wickard, Secretary of Agriculture, January 13, 1943.

message to Twitchell back in June that he “thoroughly approved of the proposed Mission” that focused on “agriculture, water development, and roads” as a means of strengthening the Allied position in the Kingdom.²⁴⁸ On September 20, 1941, the British Foreign Office had requested to the NEA that the United States Government should do everything in its power to “keep the operation going”.²⁴⁹ At its core, British officialdom did not see the agricultural mission as a threat to their long-term interests in Saudi Arabia, but as a timely wartime measure which also chipped away at American neutrality.

Looking at the mission more broadly, Al Kharj represented a clear departure from the pre-war international system in which colonialism and “gunboat diplomacy” were the diplomatic norm.²⁵⁰ Long before the French demographer Alfred Sauvy coined the term “the Third World” in 1952, Saudi Arabia during the Second World War fit the profile of a developing country.²⁵¹ Simply by helping the Saudi Arabian Government to develop the country’s “agricultural and water resources”, the United States circumvented its neutrality constraints and fulfilled its aim of demonstrating its commitment to the Kingdom, Paul Alling pointed out to Sumner Welles, a noted proponent of this form of intervention.²⁵² In fact, Karl Twitchell had with Ibn Saud’s consent arranged for one of the most high profile journalists in the world, Edgar Snow, to visit Al-Kharj, so he could report and see first-hand this new kind of diplomacy in action.²⁵³ The American scholar Daniel J. Boorstin would later term this kind of statecraft “Samaritan Diplomacy”.²⁵⁴ At the time, writing to President Roosevelt, Karl Twitchell came up with a

²⁴⁸ Writing in his diary about having the British Minister’s support, Twitchell exclaimed that “*Bird had recommended that I should head the Mission!*” See SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry June 24, 1941.

²⁴⁹ Gordon Merriam had passed along this information to Twitchell SML: Karl Twitchell Papers, Box 1, Diary, Entry, September 20, 1941.

²⁵⁰ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54, D 403, Box 15 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1941 1954. Alling to Welles, September 27, 1941.

²⁵¹ Alfred Sauvy, ‘Le Tiers Monde. Sous-Developpement et Developpement, Reedité, Augmenté d’un Mise a Jour’ *Population*, 16 annee. No. 3 (July-Sept., 1961) pp. 509-512.

²⁵² NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54, D 403, Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Alling to Welles, September 27, 1941.

²⁵³ NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6, Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to Kirk, September 23, 1942. Also see SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Diary, Entry August 15, 1942* Snow’s trip to Saudi Arabia was such a success that Ibn Saud gave him an opened-ended visa to visit the Kingdom in the future. Snow would return in 1945 after having reported on the first U.S. Congressional visit to Moscow since 1939. See, John Maxwell Hamilton, *Edgar Snow: a Biography* (United States, Indiana University Press, 1988) p. 158.

²⁵⁴ Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (United States: Random House, 1973) p. 575.

different name, referring to the United States Agricultural Mission as an example of a “very far reaching branch of *practical diplomacy*”.²⁵⁵

Regardless of the accusations made by the Axis, eschewing imperial pretence was a pivotal part of strategic thinking that went into formulating the agricultural mission. In hindsight, the future American minister to Saudi Arabia, Colonel William Eddy, would write in June 1945 that the mission had been successful because the United States had ultimately allowed it to become “an enterprise of the Saudi Arabian Government, sponsored and protected by the King, with personnel ultimately responsible to him”.²⁵⁶ Eddy’s rationale for being “hands off” was not solely an American idea, but also reflected the traditional considerations of British policymakers who had for years successfully protected British interests through engaging with Saudi Arabian officials instead of lording over them.²⁵⁷

Despite Britain’s designation as an imperial power, it should be remembered that in 1940 Parliament enacted the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, a forward thinking measure described by one scholar as a catalyst for multilateral institutions like the United Nations’ specialized agencies, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.²⁵⁸ Later in 1943, as will be shown in chapter VI, the British Council of Anglo-Arab cultural relations would organize a branch of the British Council in Saudi Arabia tasked with passing on the many virtues of modern Britain.²⁵⁹ Rather than dividing the two allies, initiatives akin to the agricultural mission often represented a similar thrust of thinking when it came to the way that British and American diplomats viewed Saudi Arabia during the Second World War.

Anglo-American Relations and Saudi Arabia: Autumn 1941

The United States’ growing involvement in Saudi Arabia matched the expansion of American activity in the Middle East region as a whole. In October 1941, American

²⁵⁵ FDRPL: Franklin Roosevelt Papers. PPF 8452, ‘Report of the U.S. Agricultural Mission to Saudi Arabia’ Twitchell to Roosevelt, April 23, 1943. *Twitchell further articulated his view of “practical diplomacy” later that year. See Twitchell, ‘American Ideas for Arabia’ *Asia Magazine* (November, 1941).

²⁵⁶ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350, Row 67, Compartment 22, Shelf 1, Entry 3153, Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945. William Eddy to Secretary of State, June 16, 1945.

²⁵⁷ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54, D 40, Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Memorandum of Conversation- Twitchell to Merriam, September 19, 1941.

²⁵⁸ See Michael, Chege "The State and Economic Reform in Africa: A Review Article," *African Studies Quarterly*. 4(3): 3. (2000)[online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i3a3.htm>

²⁵⁹ PRO: FO 370/787. Memorandum by T.S.E. Boarse, January 8, 1944.

policymakers edged closer to war by planning a regional military command centre later to be known as United States of America Forces in the Middle East (USAFIME) in Cairo, headed by General R.L. Maxwell.²⁶⁰ Like the agricultural mission in Saudi Arabia, the scheme adhered to the United States' position of neutrality, while indirectly supporting the British policy in the region. Following the debate that surrounded the Lend-Lease question and the agricultural mission, American officials at this time re-evaluated its early collaboration with the British in Saudi Arabia. On one hand, with the wartime alliance coming to fruition in 1941, Britain and the United States working in closer conjunction had successfully bolstered the Al-Saud regime. Yet, on the other hand, the American decision to allow Britain to take full control of the provision of subsidies came with possible repercussions. The consistency and commitment that the British Government had shown in Saudi Arabia was greatly appreciated by Ibn Saud, to the point where it might give the British an insurmountable advantage as a competitor in the future.

In a memorandum that circulated within the State Department in October 1941, Gordon Merriam, warned that "the possibility must be squarely faced that if the British, alone and by themselves, get Ibn Saud through his present difficulties they may seek a future recompense at the expense of American interests in that country".²⁶¹ Indeed, according to the American minister in Cairo, Alexander Kirk, Ibn Saud was so angered by Washington's decision to refuse direct aid to Saudi Arabia that he almost rejected having an American agricultural mission sent to Saudi Arabia.²⁶² To understand the United States' role in Saudi Arabia, Merriam stressed how Ibn Saud's relationship with the British government in some respects played into American hands. An unsaid strategic *quid pro quo* kept Anglo-Saudi relations balanced; there was a Rubicon that Ibn Saud would not cross. Allowing the British government to gain a strong foothold in the country was not an option as it might risk creating the inevitable perception of Saudi Arabia falling under British control. Despite the trouble over Lend-Lease aid, Merriam argued that American involvement in Saudi Arabia helped Ibn Saud counteract the excesses of British power. Similarly, Merriam considered this to be the reason why the Saudi Arabian king had welcomed the idea of financial assistance coming from the United States and had granted oil

²⁶⁰ NARA: RG 59 Stack Area 250, Row 46, Compartment 3, Shelf 5- 04 Box 3, Entry 670. Stimson to R.L. Maxwell, October 21, 1941.

²⁶¹ NARA: RG 59, Lot No. 57, D 298 Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Memorandum by Gordon Merriam, October 20, 1941.

²⁶² SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry September 15, 1941.

concessions to an “an American company” rather than a British one in the 1930s.²⁶³ However, Merriam seems to either ignore, or to be unaware of the fact that in 1936 the king had in fact awarded oil concessions to a subsidiary of the British owned Iraq Petroleum Company in the Hedjaz and Asir provinces, albeit no oil had been found.²⁶⁴

Nevertheless, what Merriam fails to further point out is the fact that assuring Saudi Arabian independence had always been a key aim of British foreign policy. Now more than ever, British officials appreciated the projective power of a sovereign Arab state that was friendly toward the Allies, without inducing the perception that the Saudis were under the sway of the British in the region. This is why news of the United States playing a greater role in Saudi Arabian affairs had been greeted warmly by the British Legation in Jeddah precisely because such an event would curtail the image of Ibn Saud being a dependent of London. Likewise, Ibn Saud knew that after dealing with the British government over the past forty years, London held no real designs of incorporating his kingdom into the British Empire. British policymakers were far more concerned with implementing policies that would do everything to dispel this myth.

Certainly, Merriam gave credit to Britain’s political influence over the Kingdom, but he makes no mention of the dominant financial position that it had attained. Regardless of CASOC’s growth potential, British capital dwarfed American investment. Long established British trading houses, such as Gellatly & Hankey and Mackenzie Gray & Company were the main importing channels that kept Saudi Arabian finances functioning.²⁶⁵ Moreover, British agency in the form of the Government of India still remained Saudi Arabia’s greatest trading partner.²⁶⁶ It is also worth remembering that year after year, Delhi organized the travel logistics of the Hajj, providing the bulk of steamers that were responsible for the safe passage of pilgrims from the Asian subcontinent, a service that only British knowhow could supply.²⁶⁷ Thus, deeply embedded in Merriam’s somewhat imperfect analysis, one can spot some of the apprehension

²⁶³ NARA: RG 59, Lot No. 57, D 298 Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Memorandum by Gordon Merriam, October 20, 1941.

²⁶⁴ St. John Philby, *Arabian Oil Adventures* (Washington: Middle East Institute, 1964) pp. 73-134. & Leatherdale, *Imperial Oasis*, pp. 199-200.

²⁶⁵ R.P.T. Davenport-Hines & Geoffrey Jones (eds.), *British Business in Asia since 1860* (Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 34 & p. 39.

²⁶⁶ Vassiliev, *History of Saudi Arabia*, p. 322.

²⁶⁷ To gain an appreciation at the level of organization that the Government of India was involved with regarding the Hajj, see ‘Report of the Civil Administrator and Director, on the Pilgrim Season’ (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1939).

and misunderstanding that would later make itself manifest in with regard to Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the latter war years.

With the United States still having no diplomatic mission in Jeddah, during that same eventful October, the American legation in Cairo led by Alexander Kirk met with a team of British officials who were based in Saudi Arabia to discuss the current situation in the Kingdom. This group included Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, his Vice Consul, the Arabist, John Wall, and Colonel Charles De Gaury. The State Department at this time was not in the same league as the British Foreign Office when it came to monitoring events in Saudi Arabia. This was one of the reasons why the United States would collaborate so closely with Britain during the Second World War.

American officials listened carefully as the British contingent shared with them a glimpse of what was going on in the Kingdom. Firstly, Stonehewer-Bird informed the Americans that for the upcoming year of 1942, the British government would likely raise the subsidies earmarked for the Kingdom because of the continuing decline in the revenue generated by the Hajj. The King had recently told the British minister that:

*“Great Britain is my friend and always has been. Great Britain is the friend of the Arabs and has so shown itself in the past. The Arab countries need a powerful European friend and Great Britain is undoubtedly preferable to any other country to fill that role. Therefore it is the duty and in the interest of all Arabs (Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians) not to embarrass the British Government in any way in the prosecution of the war”.*²⁶⁸

American officials who were observing the situation in Saudi Arabia did not regard the British minister’s statement to mean that Ibn Saud was exclusively under British influence. Wallace Murray relayed this impression to high-ranking policymakers like Adolf Berle and Sumner Welles who took this as positive news as they were pleased to hear of the King’s allegiance to the Allies’ regional interests *vis-a-vis* the Axis powers. Stonehewer-Bird further made clear that in Saudi Arabia, despite having advisors that were sympathetic to the Axis cause, Ibn Saud’s opinion was the only one that mattered. The King was an independent and well informed leader. He had a team of people whose only job was to listen to radio broadcasts and

²⁶⁸ NARA: RG 59, Lot No. 57, D 298 Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Murray to Berle, Welles and Hull, October 30, 1941.

transcribe them so he would be up to speed on world events. When Ibn Saud learned from these reports that Nazi Germany had invaded the Soviet Union, he believed the Germans violated the Arab rules of friendship by attacking a country in which they were bound to by treaty. This betrayal had a tremendous impact on Ibn Saud and convinced Saudi Arabian officials, who may have formerly been leaning towards the Axis that Germany was not to be trusted. If this was the way that Germany dealt with the Soviets, what type of aggression would the Germans mete out to a struggling and emerging state like Saudi Arabia?²⁶⁹ The message therefore was that Ibn Saud was a man of his word, someone whom the wartime alliance could trust and vice versa. It was this strongly held belief that helped form the contours of the Anglo-American relations in 1942.

Conclusion

The early Anglo-American relationship was guided by the strategic premise that by helping the Al-Saud regime to remain economically solvent, the Allies would contribute to the larger objective of keeping Axis influence at bay, not just in the Arabian Peninsula, but also in the wider Middle East. In 1941, it can be argued that Saudi Arabia evolved into an Anglo-American concern as a result of British and American officials realizing that their interests in that country were interdependent. Rather than seeing American interest in Saudi Arabia as a prospective threat, British authorities viewed it more as a strategic opportunity. Expectations that the United States would go ahead and subsidize Ibn Saud directly fit neatly within the Anglo-Saudi paradigm based on the perception of Britain not acting as a domineering power in its dealings with the Kingdom. Moreover, the rise of United States' influence in Saudi Arabia should be measured alongside the broader motivations of British wartime diplomacy, designed to harness American power precisely at a time when the European war was becoming global. By this token, American involvement in the Kingdom, from finding ways to finance the Saudi Arabian Government to offering an agricultural mission, was helped along and coordinated with the assistance of British officials based in Washington, London and Jeddah.

²⁶⁹ NARA: RG 59, Lot No. 57, D 298 Box 15, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Murray to Berle, Welles and Hull, October 30, 1941.

But the Roosevelt administration's decision to scrap a plan to finance Ibn Saud directly was not a symbol of American indifference to Saudi Arabia, nor to its British ally. In 1941, Ibn Saud's kingdom had not yet fully crystallized into becoming a beacon of American influence in the Middle East. It remained politically crucial for the administration to maintain its wartime neutrality, and without the proper official agency inside the country, the State Department wisely deferred to the British to take control of the financial emergency faced by Saudi Arabia. In a province that had primarily been a British sphere of influence, this made perfect political and strategic sense. Britain - with all of its intimate knowledge of the Middle East - could assist the process of getting the United States Government involved in Saudi Arabia in a more operative manner, a stratagem most notably held by Karl Twitchell, the unsung figure who laid the foundations for closer Anglo-American cooperation in the Kingdom. Likewise, Twitchell's efforts to establish an American agricultural mission, a policy that gave priority to what he called "practical diplomacy", would in the upcoming years greatly influence how the United States and Britain would fashion their policies with regard to Saudi Arabia.

Despite the two allies successfully keeping Axis propaganda at bay in Saudi Arabia, overall, studies of the subject have treated 1941 as an afterthought, or have used this period to give greater context to their explanations as to why discord and antagonism overtook the two allies in the latter years of the war. Certainly, evidence of Britain and the United States holding different perspectives over the extent of influence that they wielded inside the Kingdom foretold areas of future conflict. It might be said that the propensity of American officials to believe that their country possessed a singular connection with Saudi Arabia as an "anti-imperial power" did not bode particularly well for preserving inter-allied cohesion. Yet, for the time being, these slight fissures gave way to a mutual emphasis of the British and American governments reaching for a far greater goal of making sure that Ibn Saud and Saudi Arabia remained firmly within the Allied fold. With the Second World War expanding in scope after December 7, 1941, the next chapter will show Anglo-American collaboration in Saudi Arabia entering into a new phase during which the two countries would be more tightly bound together than ever before.

Chapter III

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia: Wartime Strategy

1942

Introduction

Donning traditional Arab dress, the American minister to Saudi Arabia, Alexander Kirk, presented his diplomatic credentials to King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud at the royal encampment in Dhurma on May 12, 1942.²⁷⁰ After an exchange of pleasantries, the topic of discussion quickly turned towards the ongoing war. The American minister confidently reassured Ibn Saud that the United States and their ally, the British Government, were determined to “eliminate the destructive forces of Hitlerism”.²⁷¹ Although neutral, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had a role to play in the fight to turn back the Axis tide in the Middle East. A period of time that has generally been discounted by historians, this chapter examines how and why Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia in 1942 grew more interdependent by way of the Kingdom assuming a new level of geostrategic importance in the conflict.²⁷²

On the surface, there were episodes that seem to fit with the “competitive” leitmotif of the subject’s historiography, particularly the debate over which one of the allies should defend Saudi Arabia’s oil installations.²⁷³ Certainly, a substantial part of the argument stemmed from the fact that both Britain and the United States were reluctant to deal with a scenario in which the German army was at the doorstep of the Persian Gulf. But in this case, much of the inter-allied tension arose from a source different than the frictions associated with national rivalry. Both

²⁷⁰ The city of Dhurma was located about a one hour drive from the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh.

²⁷¹ NARA: RG 84, Stack Area 350, Row 55, Compartment 1, Shelf 02-3, Entry 2410, Box 1, Egypt Cairo Embassy 1936-1955. ‘Memorandum of Remarks of the Minister on the Presentation of Diplomatic Letters’, Cairo to State Department, May 11, 1942.

²⁷² Much like the historiography covering 1941, scholars of Anglo-American in Saudi Arabia have tended to overlook 1942 and start their studies in 1943. For semi-full accounts see, Davis, *Contested Space*, pp.105-112. & Miller, *Search for Security*, pp.56-61. Davis gives background to what he perceives as a heated Anglo-American argument with regards to the controversies over subsidizing Saudi Arabia; a feature that this thesis will examine more fully in Chapter 5. Miller’s study intersects with Anglo-American relations, but only through the prism of oil, which this thesis will further analyze in chapter 4. Other works that touch upon Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during 1942, include, Anderson, *Aramco, the United States and Saudi Arabia*, pp. 42-47 and Rubin, ‘Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia: 1941-1945’, pp. 255-256.

²⁷³ Daniel Silverfarb offers the most in-depth analysis at this one key feature of Anglo-American relations in 1942 that has been largely omitted by historians. See Daniel Silverfarb, ‘Britain, the US and Securing Saudi-Arab Oilfields in 1942’ *The Historical Journal*, Volume 26, No. 3 (September, 1983) p. 719-726.

countries were quick to realize that protecting the oilfields through a show of force might engender resentment amongst the local population. Moreover, as a further detriment to British and American interests, such activities would cast into doubt Ibn Saud's legitimacy as an independent ruler. Once again, officials from both countries found themselves undertaking a precarious balancing act, simultaneously wanting to increase their involvement in Saudi Arabia without abrogating the Kingdom's sovereignty in the process.

Similar concerns were also present when the two allies envisaged that air routes over Saudi Arabia could augment Allied supply lines to Asia and the Soviet Union. In this instance, after the failure of the United States to obtain access to air routes, inter-allied cooperation proved to be pivotal. As a result of the collaborative diplomatic efforts of British minister Hugh Stonehewer-Bird and the recently arrived American *charge d'affaires*, James Moose, air routes and landing rights in Saudi Arabia were acquired. What is most telling about this episode is that Ibn Saud only decided to grant air-routes once the issue became a joint Anglo-American concern. Often overlooked, this prime example of Anglo-American partnership set an important precedent. It highlights that despite obstacles, London and Washington had come to see that a unified Anglo-American front worked far more effectively as a tool of diplomacy than trying to implement British and American policies unilaterally.

Saudi Arabian Oilfields: A Question of British or American Influence

At the start of 1942, Hugh Stonehewer-Bird had confidently cabled the Foreign Office to say that regardless of Allied reverses, Ibn Saud was "wholeheartedly on our side".²⁷⁴ An Arabic proverb says that "the beauty of a man, lies in the eloquence of his tongue," and Ibn Saud undeniably had a way of using his picaresque Bedouin idioms to assuage any British or American anxieties over where his loyalty may lie.²⁷⁵ Ibn Saud likened Hitler to:

*"A man who has stuffed himself with much and varied food (the countries of Europe) in the belief that he will derive great strength from his meals. But he has swallowed, not nourishing food, but a number of vipers and scorpions and whilst they tear at his vitals, the lions, Britain, America, Russia, attack him".*²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ PRO: FO 371/31540 E 1337/13/25. Stonehewer-Bird to FO February 26, 1942.

²⁷⁵ Lacey, *The Desert Kingdom*, p. 25.

²⁷⁶ PRO: FO 371/ 35147 E140/69/25. Stonehewer-Bird to Eden, December 13, 1942.

Earlier in November 1941, in a top secret and lengthy telegram between Ibn Saud and his Minister to Vichy France, Fuad Hamza, the King censured his minister for communicating with Nazi authorities, warning him that “were we to write to Hitler, cajoling him, we would do as you desire and renounce our present acts, and we would become liars, and the proof against us would become manifest”.²⁷⁷ Saudi Arabia declaring war on the Axis, however, was an entirely different matter for Ibn Saud. He was acutely aware of his country’s own military limitations. At the end of 1940, Saudi Arabian armed forces numbered between 1,000-1,500 trained troops, with an addition of 70,000 irregulars. These men were comprised entirely of Arab Bedouins, who were no longer the battle-tested warriors they once were when they were fighting for the Al-Saud in the 1920s.²⁷⁸ Along with this, Saudi Arabia, despite being situated between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, had no navy.²⁷⁹

Earlier, London had briefly entertained the idea of establishing a formal military alliance with Ibn Saud in late 1939 and early 1940. Although Saudi Arabia’s entry into the war guaranteed access to the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, a detail pressed by the Admiralty, the dominating view emanating from London, which was not without merit given the state of the Kingdom’s military, was that having Saudi Arabia as a full-fledged belligerent was more of a strategic liability than an asset.²⁸⁰ The British Middle East Command, then led by General Archibald Wavell, expressed concern over Saudi Arabia joining the Allies: “If Ibn Saud entered the war on our side, we could not guarantee protection against Italian attacks by sea or air with the means at present”.²⁸¹ Saudi Arabia’s neutrality in this respect functioned as the country’s best form of military defence.

Taking in all of these considerations, in February 1942, the Foreign Office delivered a report to the British War Cabinet claiming that for Ibn Saud, “it is neither in his interest nor in that of His Majesty’s Government for him to adhere to the Twenty-Six Power Pact and to declare war on the Axis”.²⁸² The King’s decision not to declare war made strategic sense and fit neatly with the underlying rationale that had always guided British policy towards the Kingdom.

²⁷⁷ PRO: HW 1/203 097494. Copy of missive from Fuad Hamza to Ibn Saud, November 10, 1941.

²⁷⁸ A Foreign Office minute from this period claims: “*Ibn Saud’s dreams of an efficient regular army and air force are never likely to be realised.*” In fact, Ibn Saud had little wish to employ the Saudi Arabian Army as a paramilitary arm like the “wild Ikhwan”. See PRO: FO 371/245/89 RE 1636/1636/25, Bullard to Halifax, November 29, 1940.

²⁷⁹ NARA: Microfilm T1179 Reel 3, Bert Fish to State Department, March 11, 1940.

²⁸⁰ PRO: FO 371/24549. Minute by Laurence Baggelay, October 6, 1940.

²⁸¹ PRO: FO 371/24/547 E2794/236/65. Lieutenant Colonel Mallaby to Eyres, October 19, 1940.

²⁸² PRO: FO 371/31540 E 1337/13/25. Stonehewer-Bird to FO February 26, 1942.

Stonehewer-Bird had written to the Foreign Office that if Saudi Arabia was forced to join the Allies, Ibn Saud's credibility as an independent Arab statesman would be lost:

*"It would be interpreted not only be our enemies, but his enemies in the Moslem world as proof that he was merely the tool of the British who had betrayed Islam and exposed the Holy Land to danger in British interests only... Instead of an unwilling ally we have a willing and grateful friend who will use his whole influence on our side".*²⁸³

In this respect, Ibn Saud's "whole influence" came into play once more in the early summer of 1942 when evidence of the war reaching the Arabian Peninsula was as ample as it was distressing. The possibility was not overstated when the British defeat at Tobruk in June of 1942 is taken into consideration. Describing the loss, the British war correspondent Alan Moorehead simply wrote: "It was defeat as complete as may be".²⁸⁴ If Axis forces attained control of both shores of the Mediterranean, all Allied shipping to port entries in the Nile Delta, Persian Gulf, India and Red Sea would be forced to travel the long route around the Cape of Good Hope to port entries. As the German Army reached the foot of the Caspian Sea, and the Japanese seized the Nicobar and Andaman Islands off the coast of India, Saudi Arabia lay dangerously centred between the two Axis armies.²⁸⁵ Looking back at this dangerous period, the American Ambassador at the Court of St. James, John G. Winant, wrote:

*"...the picture of Germany joining hands with Japan on the shores of the Indian Ocean, advancing through Spain and Gibraltar to Dakar, closing the Mediterranean, cutting off the Middle East oil, and severing Britain's life line to India and Australasia...would not have been a pleasant one for us or Russia".*²⁸⁶

²⁸³ PRO: FO 371/ 31/ 456. Stonehewer-Bird to FO & War Cabinet, February 25, 1942.

²⁸⁴ Alan Moorehead, *A Year of Battle* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1943) p. 209.

²⁸⁵ Richard M. Leighton & Robert W. Coakley, *United States Army in World War II, The War Department, Global Logistics and Strategy 1940-1943* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History Department of the Army, 1955) pp. 108-111.

²⁸⁶ John G. Winant, *Letter from Grosvenor Square* (London, 1947) p. 5. Prior, in October 1941, Hitler discussed this contingency during a meeting with the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, to use the Caucasus and its oilfields as a staging post for a lunge against the Arab states. See- Galeazzo Ciano, (ed.) Hugh Gibson, *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943: The Complete, Unabridged Diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936-1943* (United States: Simon, 2001).

The capture of Tobruk and the German attack on the Baku oil fields in the Caucasus that same month reinforced the view offered by Winant.²⁸⁷ That year, according to the United States Government's Enemy Oil Committee (EOC), a group made up of an array of military-related departments, the Axis ground forces consumed 5.3 million tons of petroleum products in total, with seventy-four percent of it being spent at the Eastern Front.²⁸⁸ From the viewpoint of Allied war planners, the new CASOC oil refinery at Ras Tanura near Dhahran, in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, was regarded as insurance if the British-run refineries at Bahrain and Abadan were "put out of action".²⁸⁹ Moreover, a German takeover of the Baku oilfields meant that the Soviet Union would lose nearly 90% of its fuel resources.²⁹⁰ It was beginning to dawn on the Allies that Saudi Arabia might truly loom as the next vital source for oil.

With the United States now able to freely act as an Allied belligerent power in 1942, the wartime alliance debated over how best to defend the Saudi Arabian oilfields. Although Saudi Arabia was nestled within the realm of *Pax Britannica*, the United States Government had a role to play given the fact that the CASOC oil concessions were tied to approximately 160,000 American stockholders.²⁹¹ A year previously Max Thornburg, an executive for a subsidiary of CASOC- the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BPC) - and later an oil consultant to the State Department who would play a major role in the development of wartime American oil policy, had raised a worrying hypothetical question with the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson.²⁹² If the Axis did indeed march into Saudi Arabia, which country would be responsible for demolishing the oil installations before they became a war prize for the Axis? Stimson replied that there was "no urgent reason" to destroy any of the installations, but if it became necessary, the sole action

²⁸⁷ A thorough account of German plans to use the Caucasus as a springboard into the Middle East to boost its oil production, see Joel Hayward, 'Hitler's Quest for Oil: the Impact of Economic Considerations on Strategy, 1941-1942' *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1995) pp. 94-135.

²⁸⁸ NARA: RG 253, 650/6/6/30/07, Entry 913, Box 5786, 'Axis Oil Requirements of 1942'. Memorandum Report by the Enemy Oil Committee, June 10, 1942.

²⁸⁹ NARA: RG 250/49/32/05, Box 1, Lot File No. 78 D440, Entry 1435, Record of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1942-1953. F.W. Oligher to State Department, Undated Memorandum, summer 1942.

²⁹⁰ Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin Wars: From WWII to Cold War, 1939-1953* (United States: Yale University Press, 2009) p. 118.

²⁹¹ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 57 D 298 Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs, 1941-1954. Memorandum by James Moffett, April 16, 1941. By 1959, the number of stockholders connected to the CASOC concessions had risen to 1,000,000 stockholders. See, Roy Lebkicher, George Rentz, Max Steineke, *Aramco Handbook* (Arabian American Oil Company, 1960) pp. 135-136.

²⁹² NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 57 D 298 Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs, 1941-1954, Stimson to State Department, June 5, 1941.

and responsibility fell on the British Government as Saudi Arabia was located in the Middle East.²⁹³

A year later as the threat of the German army became more real, Washington took its cue from Stimson's original judgement. Although it held no clearly demarcated boundaries, the Middle East traditionally existed as a broad geographic space referring to the corridor of land and sea stretching from Gibraltar to Karachi.²⁹⁴ More so than any other location in the world, the Middle East was the imperial lifeline of Britain as it housed the Empire's oil reserves and linked supplies and communications with India, Britain's Southeast Asian Empire, and the Antipodes Dominions. In other words, during the Second World War, the Middle East was a yardstick in measuring the reach of British influence. Hence, the onus fell on Britain to protect Saudi Arabia's oilfields which by extension meant watching out for American interests as well.

Backed by the support of President Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, Admiral Ernest King and Chief of Staff, George Marshall sent a message to the British Joint Chiefs of Staff on August 13, 1942, stating that the matter needed to "be referred to the British Joint Chiefs of Staff for appropriate action, "since these installations are in an area of British strategic responsibility".²⁹⁵ As a credible enemy target that required protection, especially against the threat of low-level bombing, the Americans were depending on the British to send a battery of anti aircraft artillery to be used for the defence of the CASOC oil facilities in Dhahran, Aziz Ayah and Ras Tanura.²⁹⁶

Although CASOC was American owned, British authorities were already involved in protecting the company's branch of operations in Bahrein, a business holding that was incorporated in Britain. The installations there had a fair amount of British personnel, who according to CASOC executive William Lenahan, were "sleeping with British uniforms under their bunks, ready to put them on and carry out demolitions as British soldiers at an instant's notice".²⁹⁷ Saudi Arabia was an altogether different matter, however. The Kingdom was a sovereign nation, officially neutral and did not have any special military treaty relations with the British Government. Over the past year, British forces had experience in dealing with the

²⁹³ NARA: RG 59 Lot file No. 57 D 298 Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs, 1941-1954, Stimson to State Department, June 5, 1941.

²⁹⁴ For a study on the origins of the term "Middle East", see Clayton R. Koppes, 'Captain Mahan, General Gordon and the Origins of the term "Middle East"' *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Jan, 1976) pp 95-98.

²⁹⁵ Cordell Hull, *Memoirs: Volume II* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1948) pp. 1514-1515.

²⁹⁶ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Stimson to Hull, May 23, 1942.

²⁹⁷ NARA: RG 84, Stack Area 350 Row 55, Compartment 6, Shelf 05-6, Entry 2412, Box 5, Folder 863.6 Egypt Cairo Embassy 1941-1941. Memorandum of Conversation between Lenahan and Merriam, August 24, 1942.

political fallout from a series of controversial oil denial programmes in Iraq, Iran and Burma.²⁹⁸ These denials were successful in that they kept Britain's enemies from acquiring this oil, but the programme also had the negative consequence of creating a stir of anti-British sentiment and nationalist unrest within those countries.²⁹⁹ Given these mixed results, Sir Vivian Dykes, the Chief Combined Secretary of the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington, could not acquiesce to the American request:

*"In light of the relative importance and vulnerability of the works, the War Office regrets that no specific protection from British Anti-aircraft resources can be afforded to these oil installations, in addition to the protection given by the general air defense plans of the area".*³⁰⁰

Instead of London offering to help Washington, the British Chiefs of Staff let it be known that they would welcome an American anti-aircraft detachment in Dhahran that would be put in place with a "self contained unit of not more than 100 strong, with its own guns, and sufficient transport for moving supplies from the coast". The Saudi Arabian Government, said Dykes, had agreed in principle to the plan of establishing an anti-aircraft detachment that would be manned by American personnel on the condition that they would train Saudi Arabians to use the equipment.³⁰¹ Speaking in the name of the Joint Staff planners of the United States, General Albert C. Wedemeyer, future author of the *Victory Plan*, put a halt to the British proposition.³⁰² Stating that these actions went beyond the ambit of the American military, Wedemeyer contended that if the United States did go ahead and supply a small unit of troops, it would result in an "undesirable dispersion of strength".³⁰³

Viewed within the context of the summer of 1942, a period of time when the Allies were collectively on their back heels, the obvious concern of being militarily overstretched does not

²⁹⁸ Silverfarb, 'Britain, the US and Securing Saudi-Arab Oilfields in 1942', p. 722.

²⁹⁹ The British oil denial programme in Burma particularly stands out. For a full account that details its negative impact on British influence in the country afterwards, see 'Burmah Oil Affair' *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (Jan., 1966) pp.614-65.

³⁰⁰ NARA: RG 218 19 0/01/75, Box 327, Central JCS Files 1942-1945. Memorandum by Vivian Dykes, October 13, 1942.

³⁰¹ NARA: RG 218 19 0/01/75, Box 327, Central JCS Files 1942-1945. Memorandum by Vivian Dykes, October 13, 1942.

³⁰² For a study on how Wedemeyer and his work impacted United States global strategy, see Charles Edward Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1990).

³⁰³ NARA: NARA: RG 218 19 0/01/75 Box 327, Central JCS Files 1942-1945. 'Air Defense of Oil Installations in Saudi Arabia' Missive by Albert Wedemeyer's secretary, A.J. McFarland Secretary to Dykes, October 21, 1942.

fully explain why Britain and the United States were so eager to pass off the responsibilities of defending the Kingdom's oil.³⁰⁴ For one thing, the potential importance of having control over what was to become the most powerful commodity in the post-war world was still not fully realized by the two allies.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, as the historian Daniel Silverfarb has noted, plans to safeguard Saudi Arabian oil fields were further "complicated by Ibn Saud's insistence on remaining neutral and his refusal to declare war".³⁰⁶ This is entirely true, but what Silverfarb misses in his analysis is that all parties involved agreed on the priority of Saudi Arabia remaining neutral, which fed into another dilemma facing British and American officials. How would the Saudi population, known for its xenophobia, react to Allied troops being stationed within the Kingdom's territory?

Rashid Ali's coup the previous year had foreshadowed as to what could be the potential outcome. A group of CASOC employees of Arab origin had left their posts to fight against the British in Iraq. This demonstration of resistance had given pause to American officials who wondered if Ibn Saud's willingness to work with the Allies was also shared by his countrymen. Paul Alling, the deputy chief of the NEA, observed at the time: "Ibn Saud had in ordinary times, only slight control of tribesmen in the Eastern part of his territories and that, in face of such an emergency as now existed, he might well lose control of them altogether".³⁰⁷ For London "to meet their military responsibility" of protecting Saudi Arabia, Alling realized that the very presence of British forces might inadvertently destabilize a regime that was friendly to the Allied cause.³⁰⁸ But in reality, it was not just the arrival of British servicemen that might inflame the

³⁰⁴ That summer, the campaign in the Mediterranean, the Battle of the North Atlantic, supply the Soviet Union and the aftermath of the Battle of Midway and the Japanese attack on the Aleutian Islands are just a few examples of areas that were British and American strategic priorities. For an account of the Mediterranean theatre during this time period, see Carlo D' Este, *World War II in the Mediterranean: 1942-1945* (United States: Algonquin Books, 1990) p. 1-21. For the Battle of the North Atlantic, see Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (United States: Norton & Norton & Company, 1997) pp. 25-62. For the Allied supply problems to the Soviet Union in 1942, see Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War Two* (United States: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp. 377-380. For accounts on the Pacific in the summer of 1942, see Samuel Eliot Morrison, 'American Strategy in the Pacific Ocean' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (March, 1961) pp. 4-56. & Galen Rogers Parras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945* (Canada: UBC Press, 2003) pp. 70-94.

³⁰⁵ See Chapter 5 for further analysis on the dynamics of Saudi Arabian oil and Anglo-American relations.

³⁰⁶ Silverfarb, 'Britain, the US and Securing Saudi-Arab Oilfields in 1942' p. 726.

³⁰⁷ NARA: RG 59, Lot File # 57 D 298, Box 15- Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Memorandum of Conversation between Max Thornburg and Paul Alling, May 5, 1941.

³⁰⁸ Looking beyond the Rashid Ali coup, if instances like Anthony Eden's 1941 Mansion House speech, where he pledged His Majesty Government's "full support of any scheme of Arab Unity" on the surface gave voice to the new anti-colonial *zeitgeist*, the coercive dismissal of a pro-Axis prime minister in Egypt in February 1942, was further evidence that Britain's imperialistic fire was not completely extinguished. See Charles D. Smith, '4 February 1942:

Saudi populace, but the presence of any foreign troops could be viewed as an infringement on the Kingdom's sovereignty and cause unrest. Even as British and American officials went back and forth on the issue in Washington, British minister Hugh Stonehewer-Bird and the recently arrived American *charge d'affaires* in Jeddah, James Moose, were in full agreement. Their view was that any Allied military personnel entering Saudi Arabia, should be avoided as much as possible, to ensure that there would be no cause for alarm in Riyadh.³⁰⁹

Regardless, for Paul Alling it still made better political sense for Ibn Saud to rely on the "anti-imperial" United States to "guard oil installations, manage anti-aircraft guns and to give instruction for their usage".³¹⁰ Agreeing with this view was F.W. Oligher of CASOC, who had argued from the beginning that since Americans "were the most popular of foreigners in Saudi Arabia," it was only natural that the Americans should man the equipment and undertake all training.³¹¹ Oligher would not be the last American to make this point and consequently such views put a strain on the Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia.³¹² In the end, however, reaching a final decision over who would defend Saudi Arabian oilfields never had to be made. The final British victory at the battle of El Alamein in November 1942 had put a stop to the Axis advance in the Middle East. But the delicate factors pertaining to the oilfield issue, mainly the preservation of the Kingdom's neutrality, would continually influence the trajectory of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabian Air Routes: Searching For an Anglo-American Solution

Running alongside the oilfield controversy was another issue; the Anglo-American attempt to acquire air routes over Saudi Arabia highlighted the fact that British and American war planners reached a new level of partnership in the Middle East to stem the Axis tide. It was

Its Causes and Influences on Egyptian Politics and Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 1937-1945' *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Nov., 1979) pp. 453-479.

³⁰⁹ NARA: RG 84, Stack Area 350 Row 55, Compartment 6, Shelf 05-6, Entry 2412, Box 5, Folder 863.6 Egypt Cairo Embassy 1941-1941. Moose to Kirk, July 1, 1942. Stonehewer-Bird and Moose were further annoyed by an episode later that month in which a British officer, Captain Bale, was sent by the British Government to Dhahran to study the site to prepare a plan for an oil denial programme there.

³¹⁰ NARA: RG 250/49/32/05 Entry 1435, Box 2 Lot File No. 78 D 440, Record of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1942-1953. Alling to Evan Wilson, April 17, 1942.

³¹¹ NARA: RG 250/49/32/-05, Box 1, Lot File No. 78 D440, Entry 1435, Record of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1942 -1953. F.W. Oligher to State Department, Undated Memorandum, Summer 1942.

³¹² Howarth, *The Desert Kingdom*, p 198.

here in 1942, the historian James Holland noted, that the two wartime allies were becoming versed in collaboration to create the “strongest military alliance in history”.³¹³ Beyond the improving degree of Anglo-American cooperation displayed in the region, the air routes question brought into sharper focus once again the tensions associated with the concepts of “spheres of influence” and “areas of responsibility”. The very process of securing air rights in times of war also strengthened the civil aviation industry of a country in a time of peace. By its nature, air routes and airfields were contentious issues because they touched upon one nation’s influence and power.

As early as 1941, the State Department was cognizant that Britain’s substantial influence in Saudi Arabia greatly affected the air routes issue. That same year, Ibn Saud denied a Pan American Airways request for experimental trans-Arabian flights. Many believed that this decision owed to the King being pressured by British authorities seeking to protect Britain’s own civil aviation industry.³¹⁴ Pan American Airways at this time had been requested by the United States Government to organize the top secret Airport Development Program, which called for the construction of a global network of American airfields.³¹⁵ Britain, though, had a similar idea in place for the centrally located Saudi Arabia. In October 1940, Basil Newton, British Ambassador to Iraq, had envisioned Saudi Arabia playing a featured role in Britain’s emerging imperial air network. Newton, speaking to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, attested that:

*“Saudi Arabia’s value for air command may be incalculably great now that the Atlantic and Pacific have already been spanned by air-lines. We should acquire an additional and shorter line of communication between Australia, New Zealand, India, Burma, Hong Kong and Palestine and the Mediterranean, Britain, Canada and America on the other”.*³¹⁶

But in 1942, national competition between Britain and the United States over aviation took a backseat to the exigencies of war as the focus turned to Saudi Arabia and its relation to

³¹³ James Holland, *Together We Stand: America, Britain, and the Forging of an Alliance* (United States: Miramax, 2006). To further emphasize how Anglo-American relations was becoming more integrated, in June of 1942, British authorities in Washington, led by Field Marshall Sir John Dill, were expressing their gratitude to their wartime allies for providing reinforcements in the region after the aftermath of Britain’s retreat from Tobruk. See NARA: RG 218/190/01/14/16 Entry UD2 Box 148. Minutes of Combined Chief of Staff meeting, June 25, 1942

³¹⁴ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Kirk to Hull, May 19, 1942.

³¹⁵ NARA: RG 165 Entry 418, Box 1575 ‘Arabian Airfields’. Also see Alan Dobson, *Peaceful Air Warfare: The United States, Britain, and the Politics of International Aviation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

³¹⁶ PRO: FO 371/24547. Newton to Halifax, October 26, 1940.

Allied supply lines. Saudi Arabia was located in the middle of the Khartoum-Karachi supply route, a key byway through which Allied aircraft and other war materiel was shipped to the Far East. The importance of Saudi Arabian airspace had also grown considerably in the aftermath of *Operation Barbarossa* in the summer 1941.³¹⁷ Shortly afterwards, a new Allied supply route had quickly formed in the Persian Gulf through which aid was shipped to the Soviet Union from Basra and up through Russian Turkistan.³¹⁸

The War Department in Washington subscribed to a view that an air route across Saudi Arabia, possibly an airfield set up near Jeddah, would add a vital link in the chain for the supply route from Khartoum to Karachi, allowing for a securer alternative route than the present one that went via Cairo. Moreover, if the Allies were able to fly over Saudi Arabian territory, it could be a prime route to ship heavy bombers to the Soviet Union.³¹⁹ As the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson acknowledged: “The importance of securing an air route across Central Arabia lies in the fact that a direct route from Khartoum across Central Arabia to Basra, a point for delivery of aircraft ferried to the USSR is 713 miles shorter than the present route from Cairo, Lydda and Habbaniyah”. The distance of the Khartoum-Karachi route would thus be “materially reduced” for supplies heading to the Far East theatre if an air route crossing over Saudi Arabia could be established.³²⁰ If the United States therefore desired air rights, Stimson was of the opinion that Anglo-American cooperation would be paramount. In April 1942, he had told the State Department:

*“it is felt that any agreement with the Government of Saudi Arabia for the installation, operation and defense of air staging fields in that country should be negotiated by the United Kingdom,” and that the British Chiefs of staff should “take the action to that end”.*³²¹

Because of this clear demarcation, Stimson recommended that the British Chiefs of Staff should map out specific air routes and prospects for airfields.³²² In the summer of 1942, British military aircraft did not fly over Saudi Arabian soil, but instead kept to a flight route along the

³¹⁷ For an account on Operation Barbarossa its wider impact on the in 1942, see, Robert Kershaw *War Without Garlands: Operation Barbarossa 1941-1942* (Britain: Ian Allen Publishing, 2001).

³¹⁸ Russian Turkistan is the name for the western part of the Turk regions of the Soviet Union, including the Kazakh Steppes.

³¹⁹ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. ‘Report on meeting from May 12, 1942’, May 23, 1942.

³²⁰ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Stimson to Hull, June 29, 1942.

³²¹ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Stimson to Hull, April 11, 1942.

³²² NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Stimson to Hull, April 11, 1942.

periphery of Saudi Arabia's northern border between Sharjah and Bahrain.³²³ In February, concern over Axis submarines in the Indian Ocean had led the Admiralty to seek routes and landing fields from Jeddah to Kuwait and Basra. But again, the War Cabinet Chief of Staff Committee, put a stop to the idea, believing it would put needless political pressure on Ibn Saud and would put at risk the Kingdom's neutrality.³²⁴

Yet, from London's vantage point, the incentive of collaborating with the United States on the air rights issue was threefold. Firstly, on an economic level, the Americans would be more willing to lend a hand in Britain's constant struggle to obtain the dollar exchanges needed to pay for the supplies.³²⁵ The wartime economic restrictions of countries attached to the sterling bloc, particularly the Government of India, had made it difficult for the Saudi Arabian Government to obtain sovereign coins, driving up the general cost of living in the Kingdom. Greater American involvement in Saudi Arabia's economic sphere, it was hoped, might help remedy the situation.³²⁶ Secondly, in political terms, Britain's ability to work closely with the United States in Saudi Arabia was a tremendous propaganda victory. The State Department considered that it would dispel the "unfair criticism that (the) British are using the country's present distress merely as a means of increasing political control over Arab countries".³²⁷ Lastly, and arguably most importantly, the British in their approach to Saudi Arabia were trying to encourage, not discourage American activity in the Middle East, registering that American influence would be as Barry Rubin has attested, "an inevitable feature of the post-war world".³²⁸ Therefore, the air rights issue turned into a litmus test that would answer the question as to whether Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia suitably conformed to the interests of both countries.

In February 1942, the American minister to Saudi Arabia, Alexander Kirk sent a cable to the State Department from Cairo, stressing that the British taking the strategic initiative in Saudi Arabia was resulting in the "indirect protection to American interests". Here in Saudi Arabia, Kirk advised, all future American aid should work in tandem with British efforts "without

³²³ Robin Higham, *Britain's Imperial Air Routes 1918 to 1939: The Story of Britain's Overseas Airlines* (London: GI Fouris, 1960) p. 311.

³²⁴ PRO: FO 371 31/456, Minutes by Oliver Stanley, Future Operations Planning Section, War Cabinet Chief of Staff Committee, February 11, 1942.

³²⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179 Reel 6, Kirk to State Department, February 28, 1942.

³²⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179 Reel 6, Memorandum by Roy Lebkicher to State Department, February 26, 1942.

³²⁷ NARA: Microfilm T1179 Reel 6, Memorandum by Roy Lebkicher to State Department, February 26, 1942.

³²⁸ Rubin, 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia 1941-1945', p. 255.

affecting British leadership or complicating steps already taken”.³²⁹ However, like the deliberations on defending the oil installations, some of Kirk’s colleagues, such as the Assistant Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, became equally concerned about the ramifications of being so closely identified with British actions that were inadvertently imperial in tone. To place this within a wider context, the airfield question ran concurrently with the news that Corregidor had bravely surrendered after a four month siege against an overwhelming Japanese force.³³⁰ Even those American officials, who were anglophiles like Karl Twitchell, were comfortable with making the point that the Philippines had held out longer than Singapore because of the latter’s long term resentment toward British colonialism.³³¹ With the anti-colonial *zeitgeist* in full swing, the dominant American view at the time was that the United States was probably in a better position to seek out air routes from the Saudis than an imperial power like Britain. At this time, Sumner Welles wrote Alexander Kirk about the pros and cons of using British assistance:

*“...In view of the important political factors which would undoubtedly occur to the Saudi Arabs in connection with a proposed British military establishment in their country, the question arises whether, if the plan for obtaining airfields is to have a reasonable chance of success, should it not be put forward and worked out purely and simply as a United States project?”*³³²

Recognizing British liabilities is not to deny, though, that a large segment of the State Department sought to expand Anglo-American cooperation. The aforementioned experience of the British in the region was necessary for the mission to be accomplished. But initial apprehension over a British military presence unfurling in Saudi Arabia led the United States to attempt to strike out on its own with regard to the air-route issue.

³²⁹ NARA: Microfilm T1179 Reel 6, Kirk to State Department, February 28, 1942.

³³⁰ For an intimate account of the Battle of Corregidor, see Eric Morris, *Corregidor: The American Alamo* (United States: Cooper Street Press, 1982).

³³¹ SML: Karl Twitchell Papers. Box 1, Diary, Entry May 7, 1942. Also in May of 1942, this was the time when Roosevelt began lecturing Churchill over colonialism and the future of Southeast Asia, according to Christopher Thorne. See- Christopher Thorne, “Indochina and Anglo-American Relations” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 45, no. 6 (February, 1976) p. 78 & pp. 73-96. For further insight, see Walter LaFeber, “Roosevelt, Churchill, and Indochina: 1942:1945” *American Historical Review*, LXXXX (1975) pp. 1277-1295. For British perspective on the loss of Singapore and its connection to the failures of British colonialism, see William Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: the Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (Britain: I.B. Tauris, 2006) pp. 293-338. & Roland Turner, ‘Prologue: The Two Miss Perhams’ *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1991) p. 21.

³³² NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Welles to Kirk, March 26, 1942.

Simon Davis has summed up the United States Government's dealings with the Kingdom during this time as demonstrating "American inhibition".³³³ Yet, the air routes issue was an example illustrating that Americans would be pro-active. Although he now headed the American Agricultural Mission, Karl Twitchell continued to use his own personal diplomacy to forward American interests. Making no promises, he told members of the American Air-Corps Ferry Command (AACFC) based in Cairo that he could persuade the King to give permission for an airfield to be constructed in the centre of the country, either in Riyadh or at Fort Duwadamie.³³⁴ After meeting with Ibn Saud in February 1942, Twitchell announced that the king was open to the idea of allowing the United States to construct air routes and airfields, but only as long as the Americans left the mechanical equipment behind as a "present" to the Saudi Arabian Government.³³⁵

After Twitchell laid the foundations, that spring Alexander Kirk was given orders to ascertain whether Ibn Saud would grant the use of air-routes and airfields in his country.³³⁶ Kirk arrived in Jeddah on May 11, 1942 to open up a new permanent American legation, a signal to both Ibn Saud and London that Washington now took its engagement in Saudi Arabia seriously. There, he met with the Saudi Arabian Finance Minister, Shaikh Abdullah Suleiman, who according to Kirk was ready to "volunteer the statement that there was no objection to the flight of United States planes over Saudi Arabia or even the establishment of an airport".³³⁷ At first, Kirk was pleased by Suleiman's initial response, but then the American minister made the mistake of overstepping his charge. In a moment of candour, he let it slip that the crux of the air rights issue had to do with the "speedy transfer of aircraft to points from which they could be used most effectively in striking against the forces of the Axis".³³⁸

Originally, Karl Twitchell had warned the State Department that if the subject of air routes was broached in any other way than head on, the Saudis would feel dishonoured. By now,

³³³ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 108.

³³⁴ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. 'Possibilities of Construction of One or More Airports in Saudi Arabia' Louis S. Girbel Jr. Captain, Air Corps, Chief, Intelligence Section, Air Corps Ferrying Command to Commanding General ACFC. February 4, 1942.

³³⁵ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. 'Possibilities of Construction of One or More Airports in Saudi Arabia' Louis S. Girbel Jr. Captain, Air Corps, Chief, Intelligence Section, Air Corps Ferrying Command to Commanding General ACFC. February 4, 1942.

³³⁶ FRUS 1942. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa* Welles to Kirk, February 26, 1942, p. 564. & NARA: RG 59/34/13/4 Box 5809. Welles to Kirk, April 15, 1942.

³³⁷ NARA: RG 59/ 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Kirk to State Department, May 19, 1942.

³³⁸ NARA: RG 59/ 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Kirk to State Department, May 19, 1942.

it was too late as Kirk had erroneously delivered a mixed message. If Suleiman heard Kirk correctly, the request for air routes for Allied supplies had morphed into the establishment of bases on Saudi Arabian soil for the purpose of launching attacks against Axis forces. This made Saudi Arabian officials reconsider the American request and its effect on their country's position of "benevolent neutrality". Indeed, shortly afterwards, Ibn Saud's son, Prince Faisal would complain to Kirk that American airfields located in Saudi Arabia meant for military usage "might constitute an invitation for certain other countries to attack, a contingency which would be particularly serious in the case of countries unable to resist such aggression".³³⁹

Two weeks later, Kirk met with Suleiman once more and after hearing about Faisal's earlier response, the American minister's queries this time were more specific and less ambitious. Seeking the King's approval, Kirk asked if the United States would be able "to fly planes non-stop across Saudi Arabia on specified routes from Khartoum to Basra and from Khartoum to Bahrain, avoiding the restricted area in the Hejaz." Instead of air bases, the United States Government sought "forced landing fields". After his previous obfuscation, it is not surprising that Suleiman was "cordial", yet "not particularly responsive" during his talks with Kirk. Without a concrete answer to his latest request from either Suleiman or the King, Kirk returned to his post in Cairo empty-handed. Later, Kirk tried to explain away his clumsy handling of the situation by blaming other issues like procuring rice supplies from the Government of India that "occupied his (Ibn Saud) mind to the exclusion of others".³⁴⁰ However, what had initially been thought to be a well-conceived plan meant to activate a formal American presence in Saudi Arabia, Kirk's mission in the end revealed the true limitations of American influence and the essentiality of British diplomatic assistance.

Hugh Stonehewer-Bird and James Moose: Agents of Anglo-American Cooperation

Because there was still no official American diplomatic or intelligence presence in Kingdom, the United States would have to depend more on their wartime ally when it came gaining access to air routes. All four of His Majesty's Governments' ambassadors to Saudi Arabia during the Second World War- Reader Bullard, Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, Stanley Jordan

³³⁹ NARA: RG 59/ 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Kirk to State Department, May 11, 1942.

³⁴⁰ NARA: RG 59/ 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Memorandum 'Visit of the Minister to Saudi Arabia to Present his Letter of Credence, to King Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud', Kirk to Hull, May 23, 1942.

and Laurence Grafftey-Smith - the “last of the Dragomans” - had all served in the dominions of the former Ottoman Empire and had previously held diplomatic posts in Arabia, dating back as far as 1920.³⁴¹ Rather than viewing Britain’s superior position in the Kingdom as a threat, American officials would begin to use it as an asset. This point would be made visibly clear after James Moose took his post as the new American *charge d’affaires* in Jeddah.

In the wake of the recent American diplomatic failure, Moose, dined at the British legation with Hugh Stonehewer-Bird. This was one of those informal occasions that allowed for frankness, and this informality and openness brought results. The serious business of the push for air rights was discussed, and the effort quickly transformed and became Anglo-American in character.³⁴² Fluent in both Arabic and Farsi on top of possessing a photographic memory, James Moose - the highest-ranking American official on the ground - like Twitchell before him, became the unlikely architect of American policy in Saudi Arabia.³⁴³ Moose’s British colleague, Stonehewer-Bird was appointed Minister in January 1940 and was in many respects the personification of British power in the Kingdom. As the State Department had noted, all assistance to Saudi Arabia was directly controlled by the British minister in Jeddah. In the eyes of Saudi Arabian officials, he was not just a diplomat, but the man who controlled the purse strings of Britain’s wartime subsidies.

Shortly after their dinner engagement, Stonehewer-Bird and Moose recommended to their superiors in London and Washington that a “joint or parallel action by the American and British in Jeddah” would be fully commensurate with obtaining rights to Saudi Arabian air-routes. In the opinion of James Moose, the earlier lukewarm response from Suleiman was a result of a “lack of British support at the outset”.³⁴⁴ Appreciating the need for change in order to remedy the failure of the American financial aid package in 1941 and the unresolved air-routes

³⁴¹ Reader Bullard - Agent Consul 1925. Hugh Stonehewer-Bird - Consul 1927. Stanley Jordan - Acting Consul 1925, Laurence Grafftey-Smith - Vice Consul 1925. See Godfrey Hertslet (ed.) *Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Yearbook 1946* (London: Harrison & Sons 1946).

³⁴² NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6 Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to Cairo & State Department, July 29, 1942.

³⁴³ Phone Interview with Clarence Macintosh, January 26, 2006. Clarence Macintosh speaking about James Moose, “He could read ‘Gone With the Wind’ in two days and remember everything...He knew everything. If you wanted to know about Russian train tracks, he knew it.” In the 1960’s Moose lectured and wrote extensively on Foreign Affairs. Moose on the United States position in the world in 1965, “Our affairs would be better directed and our interests better served if we exercised more reticence in intl. matters and took our claims to international leadership less seriously.” See University of Arkansas Mullins Library (UAML): James Moose Papers, Box 8, Lecture Notes, January 18, 1965.

³⁴⁴ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Moose to Cairo & State Department, July 14, 1942.

issue, Moose grew more convinced that the answer lay in the collective influence of both the British and American governments.

According to Aaron David Miller, American officials in 1942 “recognized the necessity of cooperating with Great Britain for the benefit of the allied cause,” but he also claims that many officials “became staunch advocates of safeguarding interests which they believed were more national in character”.³⁴⁵ It can equally be argued that rather than being an impediment, the alliance with Britain in Saudi Arabia helped secure immediate American interests. With London already supplying Ibn Saud with monies, foodstuffs and other essentials, greater cooperation with the British on the air routes could repair the political damage caused by the Americans mixed diplomatic efforts of the previous year. At this time in Cairo, on a higher policy-making level, Alexander Kirk and Britain’s Minister of State in the Middle East, Richard Casey, both agreed that gaining access to air routes in Saudi Arabia called for joint Anglo-American course of action.³⁴⁶

So on July 25, 1942, Stonehewer-Bird and Moose met with Suleimann to request that he inform Ibn Saud that the air-routes were no longer an American request, but had turned into an Anglo-American necessity. Shortly thereafter, Stonehewer-Bird and Moose received an answer back from Suleimann. This time, Ibn Saud granted the request, giving permission for his “friends”, the *British*, to use nonstop trans-Arabian flights for the Khartoum and Basra supply route. If Britain did not object, the Americans could also be included in the arrangement. Three days later under the “desert moonlight”, seventeen kilometres from Mecca, a setting described by the American *charge d affaires* as more “worthy of conspirators, rather than of foreign service officers”, Moose met Suleiman and his cohort, Najib Sahla.³⁴⁷ The four men sought to clarify the extent to which the request made to the King over air-routes had been conveyed as a joint Anglo-American venture, or whether it had in fact been presented as separate British and American requests. The Saudi Arabian officials became noticeably evasive. Suleiman told Moose that the air-route issue was first brought to the attention of the King informally, but that it had not been taken seriously until it was regarded to be a joint Anglo-American request.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 54.

³⁴⁶ FRUS 1942. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa* Kirk to Berle, Vol. IV., July 24, 1942, p. 573.

³⁴⁷ NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6 Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to Cairo & State Department, July 29, 1942.

³⁴⁸ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Moose to Cairo & State Department, July 25, 1942.

Noting Ibn Saud's choice of words, "his friends, the British", Moose naturally inferred that granting the British air-routes was "a manifestation of gratitude for past favors and for present assistance".³⁴⁹ That same month, London announced that for the upcoming year of 1943 it was preparing to raise its subsidy to over four million pounds, which constituted close to 80% of the Saudi Arabian Government's yearly budget.³⁵⁰ British policies in Saudi Arabia were therefore a blueprint for the Americans to use to construct their own sway of influence that would extend into the future. The Anglo-Saudi relationship had not been built upon grand declarations or even shared ideologies. It rather was an affiliation conceived in a "practical way". To assure landing rights, Moose ultimately believed that to raise the United States' profile in the Kingdom, the United States needed to once again offer more assistance to Ibn Saud. In short, advising the NEA back in Washington, Moose wrote that the "the King would have liked some similar assistance from the American Government in order that he could then refer to "his friends, the Americans".³⁵¹ As will be laid out in the upcoming chapters, the United States took this lesson to heart; a lesson that would have significant consequences on the Anglo-American relationship.

While the joint Anglo-American approach opened the door to acquiring air-routes, the complexities of preserving Saudi Arabian neutrality would end up delaying it. The obscure assurances that had been made by Shaikh Suleimann had yet to come to full fruition, forcing both Moose and Stonehewer-Bird to raise the subject with Shaikh Yussef Yassin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Yassin has been regarded by British and American officials at the time and historians alike, as a *provocateur* when it came to sowing discord among the Americans, the British, and Ibn Saud. Back in 1942, James Moose considered Yassin to be a troublemaker, "obstructive...irritating...and often appears to create difficulties so he will be able to acquire merit in the King's eyes by solving them afterwards".³⁵² Although the mere involvement of Yassin in the air routes issue complicated matters, as a member of Ibn Saud's *Privy Council*, it was within his purview to discuss the specifics of the Anglo-American plans. How many planes were to be flown over Saudi Arabia? How far would they pass by and miss the Ikhwan

³⁴⁹ NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6 Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to Cairo & State Department, July 29, 1942.

³⁵⁰ PRO: FO 371 31448 E 41/14/117/25. Foreign Office to Stonehewer-Bird, July 19, 1942. Also see, Davis, *Contested Space*, pp. 107-108.

³⁵¹ NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6 Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to State Department, July 29, 1942.

³⁵² NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6, Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to State, September 20, 1942.

settlements? And most importantly, how would the Anglo-American air routes affect Saudi Arabian neutrality once it became known by Axis propagandists? These questions were all relevant when during the summer of 1942 radio broadcasts from Berlin had ominously called attention to “American activities” in Saudi Arabia. As a result, pro-Axis advisers amongst the King’s own entourage, Khalid Al Gargani and Beshir, were kept out of the loop regarding the Allied air routes request.³⁵³ With all of these existing risks, Moose surmised that it was “fairly closely to fact,” that the mixed signals and delaying tactics being employed by Suleimann and Yassin must reflect the cautionary attitude of Ibn Saud.³⁵⁴

But finally, on August 29, 1942, the King assented to the Anglo-American request. Given his position as the “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques”, Ibn Saud demanded “utmost secrecy” for the air-routes and held that flights must not “prejudice their interests nor those of the Arabs”.³⁵⁵ The Anglo-American flight path would have to avoid the “Holy Land”, not just Medina and Mecca, but also the larger area defined by Omar ibn Khattab, the Second Caliph, that stretched to the Nejd in the eastern part of the country. Explaining the reasons behind the government’s cautious stance, Yassin made clear to both Moose and Stonehewer-Bird that the King had to balance the requirements of Britain and the United States with the knowledge that “agitation and dismay would be created among Moslems both in Arabia and elsewhere if they were to learn that British or American planes, or both, were permitted to fly over Saudi Arabia”.³⁵⁶ Hearing of this news, Paul Alling fully agreed with the position of Saudi Arabia, stating that it was best for the Allies to be “out of sight, out of mind”.³⁵⁷ As Saudi Arabia’s neutrality underpinned the country’s sovereignty, British and American officials along with Ibn Saud were unified in their efforts of making sure that the Allies’ activities in the Kingdom would remain clandestine.

In the end, the air routes over Saudi Arabia, including “emergency landing rights”, came into being on October 6, 1942. British and American aircraft were given permission to fly over northern and southern parts of Saudi Arabia, avoiding the Hedjaz. The Middle East expert,

³⁵³ NARA: RG 84, Stack 350 6, Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to State, September 23, 1942. * The suggestion that a secret could *ever* be kept in Riyadh was later scoffed at by none other than Stonehewer-Bird.

³⁵⁴ In 1953 before his death, Ibn Saud established the Council of Ministers which became the key decision-making body for the Saudi Arabian government until 1995. The council consisted of the King who is the prime minister, the Crown Prince who is deputy, the second deputy prime minister and cabinet ministers. See- James Wynbrandt, *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia* (Maple Vail: United States, 2010) pp. 206-208.

³⁵⁵ NARA: RG 84 Stack 350 6, Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to State Department, September 8, 1942.

³⁵⁶ NARA: RG 84 Stack 350 6, Shelf 05-06, Entry 2412, Box 5. Moose to State Department, September 8, 1942.

³⁵⁷ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Alling to S.W. Boggs, Office of Geographer, September 29, 1942.

Elizabeth Monroe, who at the time worked in the Ministry of Information, stressed to the British Political Intelligence Department that “at Ibn Saud’s request, this concession will not be made public: should the news leak out, he would be compelled to deny that he granted permission”.³⁵⁸ To ensure Saudi Arabia’s own plausible deniability, Yassin had earlier demanded assurances from Stonehewer-Bird and Moose that an apology would be made if the violation of Saudi air space was made public.³⁵⁹ If the national identity of the plane was obscured and unable to be seen, Stonehewer-Bird wryly noted, no protest would be necessary. However, if planes were clearly seen to be American, for example, Saudi Arabian officials could subsequently “protest” to the British legation where they would then be informed that no British planes were present and, vice versa, they would complain to the American legation if seeing British planes. What this seemingly anecdotal story – the use of disinformation to deny public knowledge of the air routes - perfectly captures is the extent to which Anglo-American cooperation was tied to Ibn Saud and the preservation of Saudi Arabia’s neutrality.

After it had been made official that air-routes had been acquired, Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, reporting to the Foreign Office spoke glowingly of Anglo-American cooperation as it “demonstrated the wisdom of the joint action”.³⁶⁰ The abiding lesson gained by this approach, however, might have been more fundamentally felt on the American side. Looking back over the events of the summer, the American minister Alexander Kirk would expand on the earlier assessment of his colleague James Moose. From Cairo, he cabled the State Department and explained the way that British subsidies, totalling three million pounds a year, had accounted for the disparity in British and American influence in Saudi Arabia. For the time being, said Kirk, the Saudi Arabian Government was left with a large deficit of 750,000 pounds per year.³⁶¹ It was unlikely that the British would raise their already generous subsidy. Although British subsidies came indirectly from American Lend-Lease aid, it was still not perceived in Saudi Arabia as *direct* American aid. Would filling the gap in Saudi Arabia’s finances in 1943 make amends for the renegeing of direct American aid in 1941?

³⁵⁸ PRO: FO 371/31450 E 5945/13/25. Monroe to Lockhart, October 6, 1942.

³⁵⁹ The King’s fears regarding the air routes question were actually realized in January 1943 when a United States Army plane flew over Mecca, causing a great furore with Saudi Arabian officials. See NARA: RG 59/ 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Harold Shullaw to State Department, January 13, 1943.

³⁶⁰ PRO: FO 371/ 31450. Stonehewer-Bird to Foreign Office, October 6, 1942.

³⁶¹ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Kirk to State Department, August 5, 1942.

Certainly British policy in Saudi Arabia made an impact on American thinking. Their outcomes over the past two years had been a master class for the Americans, showing how London used money and influence to gain their political objectives, which were at this point still commensurate with Washington. Rather than taking the view of Britain as a competitor, who the United States needed to outdo, Kirk advised that the United States needed to bring more to the table if Anglo-American cooperation was going to fully ensure American interests.³⁶² His proposal presages in the end one of the subject's most important episodes, the United States and Britain working to find a solution to share equally the subsidy earmarked for the Saudi Arabian Government in 1944. But during this interim period when American policy-makers were still working out the extent to which the United States government should be involved in the affairs of Saudi Arabia, Washington still felt compelled to work closely with their wartime ally.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in 1942, as the Second World War was unfolding, issues that were rooted in Allied wartime strategy such as the protection of Saudi Arabia's oil fields and the acquisition of air routes were key developments in the formation of the Anglo-American relationship in the Kingdom. These relatively neglected episodes are illuminating because they do not cast the wartime allies as being constant rivals in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, when it came to guarding the oilfields, rather than fighting over who would lead such a mission - a direct indication of hegemony - winning this particular competition meant *not* being the power in charge. In part, the explanation as to why the wartime alliance acted cautiously because of fears that an Anglo-American military presence in Saudi Arabia would be perceived as an occupation, possibly jeopardizing Al-Saud's regime independent credibility. Maintaining the guise of Saudi Arabian neutrality also attached itself to the search for air routes over Saudi Arabia that would help open up Allied supply lines. Secrecy was required so there could be no conjecture that Ibn Saud was under the thumb of either the United States or Britain. Indeed, there was a tendency in 1942 of the two powers being wary of being perceived as in any way steering Saudi Arabian politics with this trend lasting throughout the entire war.

³⁶² NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Kirk to State Department, July 14, 1942.

Although the subject of air routes and aviation would later be a cause of inter-allied tension, for the moment, the successful acquisition of Allied air-routes showed the potential of the two powers working in tandem as allies.³⁶³ The teamwork shown by Hugh Stonehewer-Bird and James Moose on the ground validated the view that a combined British and American diplomatic effort could ensure the foreign policy aims of both countries. In fact, the two men would set such a promising example of Anglo-American cooperation that Washington and London would go on to believe that a good rapport between British and American diplomats in Saudi Arabia could mitigate political or strategic differences, a notion that was not always found to be true as will be seen in the following chapters.

Nevertheless, this was an instructive period during which the United States witnessed how the clout of British diplomacy could function as a fast track to gaining influence in Saudi Arabia. Conversely, from London's perspective, working side by side with the Americans had been a wartime policy aim, but it also allowed British officials to have a handle in the construction of United States Government's nascent policy in the Kingdom. Heading into 1943, what can therefore be observed is an Anglo-American relationship not being dragged down by national rivalry, but one that was evolving into being mutually cooperative in structure.

³⁶³ Anglo-American aviation rivalry in Saudi Arabia will be further examined in Chapter VI.

Chapter IV

Anglo-American Relations and Ibn Saud outside of Saudi Arabia, 1943

Introduction

After Britain had turned back the Germans and won the decisive Battle of El Alamein in November 1942, Ibn Saud sent a message to London “offering [his] sincerest congratulations on the magnificent success of the Eighth Army”.³⁶⁴ Despite the upswing in fortune, by 1943, British power was ultimately giving way to their wartime ally, the United States.³⁶⁵ Indeed, the hierarchical complexion of Anglo-American relations over the past year had undergone a transformation. Powered by its unrivalled financial and material wealth, the United States war machine during the Second World War now dwarfed that of friends and foes alike as it became the backbone of the Allied war effort. As the historian Warren Kimball noted, in 1943, when British strategists relented to the United States’ insistence of an Allied assault in Western Europe, the wartime alliance began to function squarely on “American terms”.³⁶⁶ For the rest of the Second World War, this shift would also make itself manifest in Saudi Arabia even as the Anglo-American relations in the Kingdom were becoming more intertwined.

Reflecting the new assertiveness in American diplomacy, on June 12, 1943, the American Ambassador in London, John G. Winant informed Winston Churchill that Lieutenant Colonel Harold Hoskins would be sent to interview Ibn Saud to explore the possibility of a Jewish-Arab rapprochement in Palestine.³⁶⁷ While the Hoskins Mission has been deemed relevant to the

³⁶⁴ PRO: FO 371/31450 E 663 6/13/25. Jeddah to Foreign Office, November 11, 1942. * After the battle Churchill demanded the “ringing the church bells all over Britain.” See, Lord Moran, *Churchill: Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran, the Struggle of Survival 1940-1965* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966) p. 84.

³⁶⁵ See - David Reynolds ‘Great Britain: Imperial Diplomacy’, ed. David Reynolds, Warren Kimball, & A.O. Chubarian, *Allies at War: The Soviet, American and British Experience 1939-1945* (Britain: Macmillan, 1994) pp. 333-354.

³⁶⁶ Warren F. Kimball, *Allies at War*, p 396.

³⁶⁷ PRO: CO 733/443/18. Winant to Churchill, June 14, 1943.

history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, its significance to Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia at this time has largely been lost on historians.³⁶⁸

Although starting out as an American idea, the fact that British and American policies were languishing in Palestine - motivated by the concept of strategic interdependence - the Hoskins Mission quickly transformed into an Anglo-American initiative. Plans for using Ibn Saud as a broker to address the Palestinian question would eventually cause inter-allied tensions, but rather than dividing the United States and Britain along nationalistic lines, the issue caused internal divisions within the respective governments. Those in the highest echelons of power, the White House and Downing Street respectively, supported the mission, while the branches of the State Department and Foreign Office that followed Saudi Arabia on an everyday basis were sceptical. In the end, the Hoskins Mission failed in its main objective: attempting to reach a solution to the Palestine question with Saudi Arabia's help. The sceptics were proven correct recognizing the overriding paradox that had always been tied to the notion of Ibn Saud's "benevolent neutrality." This implied that it was more important that the Saudi Arabian King maintained his political credibility as an independent Arab leader, rather than pressing him to act as some sort of Anglo-American pro-consul. The episode re-emphasizes that Ibn Saud's influence in the Second World War could at times be enigmatic, manifesting its full potential only when it appeared to be free of British and American interference.

To fill the void hitherto left in the historiography of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, this chapter analyzes the Hoskins Mission to show that one needs to look beyond the Kingdom's borders to gain a better appreciation of the way that the Anglo-American relationship within the country operated.

³⁶⁸ When it comes to the historiography of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, scholars have paid scant attention to the Hoskins Mission. Simon Davis' *Contested Space*, Barry Rubin's *Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia 1941-1945*, Aaron David Miller's *Search for Security* and William Roger Louis' *British Empire in the Middle East*, make no mention of it in their studies. Philip J. Baram and Thomas W. Lippman give mention to the Hoskins Mission, but without applying it to Anglo-American relations. See, Baram, *Department of State*, pp. 141-143. Lippman, 'The View from 1947: The CIA and the Partition of Palestine' *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Winter, 2007). The Hoskins Mission has on occasion been covered from a wider Anglo-American perspective. See, Monty Noam Penkovar, *Decision on Palestine Deferred: Anglo-American diplomacy 1939-1945* (London: Frank Cass, 2002) pp. 241-259. Matthew Coulter, 'The Joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine, 1943' *The Historian*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (March, 1992) pp. 465-470. From an American vantage point, see Evan Wilson, 'the Palestine Papers, 1943-1947' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4. (Summer, 1973) pp. 36-41. Samuel Halperin & Irvin Oder 'The United States in Search of a Policy: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Palestine' *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (July, 1962), p. 320-341. Most studies that discuss the Hoskins Mission do so in relation to Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, For valuable accounts see Monty Noam Penkovar, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (United States: Illinois Press, 1994) pp. 145-175. Louis Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Hell: Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Save the Jews of Europe* (Jerusalem, Gefen) pp. 95-108.

Ibn Saud as Anglo-American Pro Consul in Palestine

When 250,415 German and Italian soldiers laid down their arms on May 12, 1943 at the Battle of Tunis, marking the end of the Axis' military campaign in the Middle East, it left British and American policy makers freer to concentrate more fully on the wider political issues in the region.³⁶⁹ As the Second World War entered its fifth calendar year, Ibn Saud continued to give his tacit support to British and American wartime objectives. The question now arose as to whether the Saudi Arabian king could go one step further and help to solve one of the Allies' most troublesome political conundrums; the question of Palestine. When it came to the issue, a certain amount of gallows humour hung in the air amongst British and American officialdom. Harry Eyres of the Foreign Office's Near East Department remarked that in Palestine, his American colleagues at the State Department were "just hoping that in course of time something will turn up to solve the Jewish-Arab problem...not unlike HMG".³⁷⁰ On the other side of the Atlantic, in May of 1943, even the staunch Anglophobe, General Patrick Hurley could inform President Roosevelt in good faith that the United States and Great Britain had "kindred problems" in the Middle East, and that both countries must "come together and share equally in the final decision for or against the establishment of a Jewish Political state..."³⁷¹ Once again John Bull and Uncle Sam were "mixed up together", but this time they found themselves entangled in the Gordian knot that is still intact almost 70 years later.

The British Government which had dealt directly with Palestine since the days of Palmerston, still adhered to the controversial White Paper of May 1939, a measure designed to appeal to Britain's imperial interests in the Arab world.³⁷² In this context, Palestine functioned for London as a strategic lynchpin, protecting, in the words of the Commanders-in-Chief Committee in the Middle East, "the maintenance of sea, land and air communications throughout the Middle East and the safeguarding of our oil supplies which are vital to the British

³⁶⁹ Peter Young, *World War 1939-1945: A Short History* (London: Arthur Baker Limited, 1966) p. 231.

³⁷⁰ PRO: FO 371 34955 E 1369/506/65. Minute by Eyres, March 11, 1943.

³⁷¹ FRUS. Patrick Hurley to Roosevelt, Vol. IV, May 5, 1943, p. 776.

³⁷² See, Alexander Schloch, 'Britain in Palestine, 1838 to 1882: The Roots of the Balfour Policy' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992).

Empire”.³⁷³ But British rule in Palestine, which in the days of Allenby’s triumphant entrance into the Holy City in 1917 was a force to be reckoned with, had devolved into a rule that, by 1943, lacked confidence.³⁷⁴ The historian D.K. Fieldhouse noted years later that the Mandate was “arguably...the greatest failure in the whole history of British imperial rule”.³⁷⁵ The violent combination of Zionist extremism in Palestine during the 1940s and the Arab Revolt in the previous decade had struck at the heart Britain’s will to rule as a Great Power.³⁷⁶

From the American standpoint, Evan M. Wilson, a State Department official who served in Egypt during the Second World War, recalled that 1943 was the first year that the United States truly “adopted a definite line of policy” in Palestine.³⁷⁷ Up to that point, American policy remained largely in the shadows; sometimes critical, but never intending to take over the burden of mandatory leadership in Palestine.³⁷⁸ But after the highly publicized Biltmore Conference (May 9-11, 1942), in which Zionists delegates demanded a “Jewish Commonwealth” in Palestine, the fulcrum of worldwide Zionist activity swung from London to New York, and by doing so, Washington became progressively more involved in the issue.³⁷⁹ Returning from his diplomatic visit to the Middle East in 1943, which included a stop in Saudi Arabia, Roosevelt’s special envoy, Patrick Hurley, warned the president that because of the Zionists’ growing network of support in the United States, the Arab population was quickly turning against Americans as there was a “well defined opinion prevailing that the United States, and not Great Britain, is insisting on establishing a sovereign Jewish state”.³⁸⁰

³⁷³ PRO: CO 732 88 22. Report entitled, ‘An Appreciation of the Military Implications of the Palestine Problem on Imperial Strategy’, May 2, 1944.

³⁷⁴ See Eitan Bar Yosef ‘The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign 1917-1918’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan., 2001).

³⁷⁵ D.K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 151. For further analysis on Britain’s eroding rule in Palestine leading up to the Second World War, see Michael Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978) chapters 1-5.

³⁷⁶ For a contemporary view, speaking in this case on the British Government’s inability to crackdown on Zionist extremism, the famed historian H.A.R. Gibb lamented at the time, “a government which is forced to look on impotently while its subjects build up two, indeed three, rival armies which openly drill with weapons stolen from its own troops is no Government, but the abdication of all government.” See, H.A.R. Gibb, ‘Middle Eastern Perplexities’ *International Affairs*, Vol. XX, no. 4 (October, 1944) pg. 454.

³⁷⁷ Wilson, *Decision on Palestine*, p. 29.

³⁷⁸ For a perspective of the United States relations with Palestine preceding the Second World War, see Lawrence Davidson, *America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood* (United States: University of Florida Press, 2001).

³⁷⁹ PRO: CO 733/443/18. Copy of OSS Report #13, ‘Zionist Politics in the United States’, July 1, 1943 & Isaac B. Berkson, ‘Jewish Palestine in a Post World War’ *Journal of Educational Sociology* (1945).

³⁸⁰ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, Patrick Hurley to President Roosevelt, May 5, 1943, p. 776.

The historian Philip Baram has gone as far to assert that at this stage in the Second World War, Ibn Saud was “probably *the* major reason” for the State Department’s coolness towards Zionism with respect to Palestine.³⁸¹ In this regard, it is arguable that Arab resentment acquired a human face in the United States only when Ibn Saud had cabled the president in 1943 complaining about Zionist political activities taking place there. On May 26, 1943, Roosevelt responded to Ibn Saud’s concerns, outlining to him the highly interpretive “full consultation formula”, which stated “that no decision altering the basic situation of Palestine should be reached without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews”.³⁸² Believing that Ibn Saud’s influence reached Palestine, it bears noting that this message marked the beginning of the president using the Saudi king as an intermediary to communicate his views with the rest of Arab world.³⁸³

The scholars Samuel Halperin and Irvin Oder have asserted that, “for a time during 1939-1943, Ibn Saud was *the* key figure in a plan which seemed to offer the possibility of a negotiated settlement [in Palestine]”.³⁸⁴ The origins of the idea of capitalizing on Ibn Saud’s political influence with regard to Palestine had been the brainchild of none other than the King’s close advisor, the controversial Briton, St. John Philby. In October 1939, Philby told Chaim Weizmann - the president of the World Zionist Organization - that for the sum of twenty million pounds provided by British, American, or Jewish sources, the King of Saudi Arabia would in return actively support a Jewish state in Palestine, including the relocation of the Arab population to neighbouring Arab states.³⁸⁵ Philby had conveyed to Weizmann that a solution in Palestine “could be achieved under Ibn Saud alone”.³⁸⁶ In the end, this plan never came to fruition, and scholars since have contested that it was likely that Ibn Saud was unaware of the substance of Philby’s actions and his discussions with Weizmann.³⁸⁷ Shortly after this exchange, due to his

³⁸¹ Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East: 1919-1945*, p. 75.

³⁸² Similarly, the British Government had made a similar statement given in the House of Lords by the Secretary of the Colonies, Viscount Cranborne (Robert Cecil) on May 6, 1942. See, Hansards (HAN): House of Lords, Deb 06, May 1942, vol. 122, cc943-4 (Lord Cranborne).

³⁸³ Roosevelt using Ibn Saud as an intermediary to speak to the Arab World will be discussed further in chapter VII.

³⁸⁴ Halperin & Oder ‘The United States in Search of a Policy’ p. 323.

³⁸⁵ Susan Hattis Rolef, ‘St. John Philby and the Zionists’ *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April, 1972).

³⁸⁶ Barnett Litvinoff, ed. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series B, Vol. 2, Entry for October 6, 1939 (United States: Transaction Publishers, 1983) pp.371-372.

³⁸⁷ For more in-depth analysis, see Leslie McLoughlin, *Ibn Saud, founder of the Kingdom* (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1993).

increasingly strident anti-British sympathies, Philby eventually became *persona non grata* in Saudi Arabia.³⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Philby's efforts were soon followed up by those of the American oilman James Moffett, who put forward a similar plan in April 1941, this time to President Roosevelt directly. As covered in chapter II, in return for helping to subsidize the faltering Saudi Arabian economy, Moffett hinted that the King would willingly assent to a future Jewish State in Palestine.

There were British and American authorities at the time who thought the opposite. As far back as June 1938, Reader Bullard in his position as British minister in Jeddah had been unequivocal in his view "that no bribe would buy the support of Ibn Saud for the proposal to partition Palestine".³⁸⁹ Also holding a similar opinion was the Undersecretary of State, Adolf Berle, and NEA chief, Wallace Murray, who believed that Moffett's *quid pro quo*, had been reckless and bound to stir up trouble. Murray later claimed that placing Ibn Saud at the front of a firestorm issue like Palestine would be a major political blunder as the King would "lose face with his co-religionists in the neighbouring Arab countries".³⁹⁰ Although the schemes proposed by Philby and Moffett were audacious and ill-conceived, as ideas they died hard. They held currency because such plans exposed the ethnocentric prejudices of the time. There existed a widespread belief that "Oriental" potentates like Ibn Saud were far more susceptible to the lure of *Baksheesh*; a bribe.³⁹¹ Certainly Ibn Saud's position of "benevolent neutrality" towards the Allies to some degree had materialized on account of Anglo-American political support and subsidies. In view of this, the rationale went - that for the right price - the Desert King might consent to Jewish migration to Palestine?³⁹²

³⁸⁸ PRO: FO 371/24589, R 2306/710/25. India Office to the Secretary of State of India, August, 25, 1940.* However, on August 25, 1940, British officials with the aid of Saudi authorities placed Philby under restraint by Defence of India Rules Act when he arrived in Karachi with the intent of travelling to the United States on an Anti/British and pro-isolationist lecture tour.

³⁸⁹ PRO: AIR 2/ 1858 E791/10/31. Bullard to Halifax, June 6, 1938.

³⁹⁰ NARA: RG 59, Lot File No. 57, D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Murray to Berle May 29, 1941. For the State Department's view at this time, refer back to Chapter 2.

³⁹¹ For studies on American ethnocentric attitudes towards Arab culture, see Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (California: California University Press, 2005).

³⁹² According to Sumner Welles, from the Hoskins Mission's inception, President Roosevelt believed that Ibn Saud was "purchasable." See, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series B, Vol. Entry for July 5, 1943 (United States: Transaction Publishers, 1983) p. 514. For a British perspective on the possibility of bribing Ibn Saud, see Reader Bullard's missive to Lord Halifax in January 1938, "One hesitates to make prophecies...that no bribe would buy the support of Ibn Saud for the proposal to partition Palestine." See, PRO: AIR 2/1858, E 3791/10/31. Bullard to Halifax, June 6, 1938.

This perception remained a prevalent force when on March 3, 1943, leading Zionists figures, including Moshe Shertok (also known as Moshe Sharett, the future second Prime Minister of Israel) and Chaim Weizmann met with NEA officials in Washington.³⁹³ Shertok summed up the view of his Jewish colleague, stating that he believed Ibn Saud to be “most important Arab alive”, and that it should therefore at least be explored if the King would be interested in such an arrangement that mirrored Philby and Moffett’s earlier schemes.³⁹⁴

However, the NEA continued to have little faith in the plan to involve Ibn Saud in Palestine and its views were best encapsulated by officials stationed in Jeddah. Harold Shullaw, the *Charge D’affaires*, claimed that the three pillars of Ibn Saud’s rule could be traced back to Islam, Arabism and his friendship with the British Government. The first two pillars, stated Shullaw, would always trump British friendship. Moreover, to be regarded as leader of the Arab world, Ibn Saud could never agree to the establishment of a Jewish- controlled state in Palestine.³⁹⁵ The American minister to Saudi Arabia, James Moose also sent a strongly worded cable to Washington, warning that if such a proposal came into being, “the King will not be happy to have to choose between prejudicing his position in the Moslem world or [sic] refusing the proposals of his friends.”³⁹⁶

Regardless of their astute analysis, by the summer NEA officials would be kept out of the decision-making process. In June 1943, Under-Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, met with Weizmann to tell him that the White House supported the idea of working with Ibn Saud”.³⁹⁷ According to Welles, the president believed that Ibn Saud was “purchasable”.³⁹⁸ Later that same month, Roosevelt informed Welles to “prepare the ground”, for the plan as long as it had the full consent of Winston Churchill.³⁹⁹ As the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1939, Churchill had been made aware of the Philby proposal through his close relationship with Weizmann, a relationship

³⁹³ This meeting was attended by State Department officials, Wallace Murray, Paul Alling and William Parker and the Zionist contingent included, Chaim Weizmann, Moshe Shertok, and Rabbi Israel Goldman. See, FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa* ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, March 3, 1943, p. 754.

³⁹⁴ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, March 3, 1943, p. 754.

³⁹⁵ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, Shullaw to Hull, May 6, 1943, p. 780.

³⁹⁶ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, Moose to Hull, July 24, 1943, p. 802.

³⁹⁷ It is interesting to note that Welles would be one of Ibn Saud’s harshest critics, chastising the King, “recalcitrant” and calling him an “absolute dictator.” See Sumner Welles, *Where Are We Heading* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947) p. 220.

³⁹⁸ Litvinoff, *Letters of Chaim Weizmann*, Entry for July 5, 1943, p. 514.

³⁹⁹ SML: Harold Boies Hoskins Papers. Box 5, Folder 11, ‘Memorandum of Conversation by Dr. Chaim Weizmann’, June 12, 1943.

dating back to the First World War.⁴⁰⁰ On his trip to Washington that spring, Weizmann inferred that the Ibn Saud scheme had behind-the-scenes support coming from London, to the point where the State Department referred to the plan as “Mr. Churchill’s idea”.⁴⁰¹ Like Roosevelt, Churchill had recognized that domestically, Zionism had widespread political support.⁴⁰² Sumner Welles, therefore, sent a message to the American Ambassador in London, John G. Winant, stating that “the President believes that the time has come when an approach should be made to Ibn Saud with a view to seeing whether any basis for a settlement can be found”.⁴⁰³ On June 7, 1943, President Roosevelt wrote a personal letter to Ibn Saud, which included instructions for Lieutenant Colonel Harold Hoskins to discuss “in my name certain specific matters of mutual interest”.⁴⁰⁴

Harold Hoskins and Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia

In the long line of Roosevelt’s own personal diplomatic envoys, Harold Boies Hoskins did not typify the conventional “grey suits” at the State Department.⁴⁰⁵ Born and raised in Beirut to Presbyterian missionary parents, he came from a stock of Americans, who according to Von Joseph L. Grabill believed that the United States government had a duty to “organize...the old

⁴⁰⁰ PRO: FO 371/35163 E 3326/3326/25. ‘Personality Report’ Jeddah to Foreign Office, May 31, 1943. Weizmann was the former director of the British Admiralty’s scientific laboratories during the First World War. See, Jehuda Reinharz, ‘Science in the Service of Politics: the Case of Chaim Weizmann during the First World War’ *English Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 394 (July, 1985). *To emphasize Weizmann’s close connection with the Britain, later in June of 1943, Weizmann disclosed to Isaiah Berlin that he regarded Jewish development in Palestine as “serving British Imperial needs and based on British rather than American capital”. See, PRO: CO 733/443/18 E 311 2/89.31. Minute by Campbell, June 6, 1943.

⁴⁰¹ Michael J. Cohen, ‘The British White Paper on Palestine, May 1939, Part II: the Testing of a Policy, 1942-1945’ *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (September, 1976) pp. 728-729.

⁴⁰² The British Prime Minister had earlier confided to his cabinet in October 1941: “*The Liberal and Labour Parties will never agree to the Pro-Arab policies which are the commonplace of British Service circles, nor, so long as I remain in British public life, will I.*” See, PRO: CO 733/443/18, Reg. 826/87/31. Quote taken from Churchill’s missive to the Secretary of the War Cabinet, October 1, 1941, Campbell to Battersill, February 17, 1943. To gain further sense of the British establishment’s attitudes towards the Palestine situation during the Second World War, Lord Lloyd as Secretary of the Colonies wrote to his son on May 19, 1940, “*I find myself in a Government which is almost entirely pro-Zionist and anti-Arab, so I may have a good many difficulties ahead of me.*” Quoted from J. Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire* (Britain: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1987) p. 251. During 1943, Freya Stark had been dispatched to the United States on a speaking tour specifically for the purpose to refute and explain the Prime Minister’s pro-Zionist position in light of the White Paper to a critical American press. See Efraim Karsh & Rory Miller ‘Freya Stark in America: Orientalism, Anti-Semitism and Political Propaganda’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 39, No. 3. (July, 2004) p. 328.

⁴⁰³ PRO: CO 733/443/18. Winant to Churchill, June 14, 1943.

⁴⁰⁴ PRO: CO 733/443/18. Copy of message from Roosevelt to His Majesty Ibn Saud, July 7, 1943.

⁴⁰⁵ To further understand why Roosevelt employed an eclectic set of envoys during the Second World War, see M. Fullilove, *Special Faith and Confidence* (PhD. dissertation, University of Oxford, 2004) p. 284.

world”.⁴⁰⁶ Speaking Arabic fluently, Hoskins had served as a Middle East expert at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. In 1941, Hoskins was sent on a fact finding mission to the Middle East on behalf of the Office of War Information to survey Arab attitudes toward the war.⁴⁰⁷ The following year, he met with British officials in Cairo to discuss ways to better coordinate OSS-SOE operations in the region.⁴⁰⁸ Independently wealthy and already close friends with Roosevelt and Sumner Welles, Hoskins felt at home within the elite circles of American power. Through his personal relationships, he managed to serve as the Department liaison to the White House and Joint Chiefs of Staff. Although he was a *de facto* non-careerist Foreign Service Officer (FSO), Hoskins reputedly tired easily of what he perceived to be the timidity of some of his NEA colleagues. Nevertheless: “In terms of status, long-term influence, and intensity of personal involvement,” observed the scholar Philip Baram, Hoskins was at the centre of forging American policy in the Middle East.⁴⁰⁹

On June 14, 1943, Anthony Eden informed Ambassador Winant that although the British Government was “naturally anxious not to awaken wide public controversy”, the very fact that President Roosevelt fully supported the mission meant that they had “not the slightest objection...to send Lieutenant Colonel Hoskins to see Ibn Saud”.⁴¹⁰ The views of Eden’s colleagues at the Colonial Office were similar to those of the former Chief Secretary to the Government of Palestine, William Battershill, who opined that “if any American is to visit Ibn Saud for the purpose of discussing the Palestine problem with him I should think Colonel Hoskins is as good a choice as can be made.”⁴¹¹ In his comprehensive *The Department of State in the Middle East-1919-1945*, Baram stresses the Anglophobic bias of American officials. He characterized Hoskins as being “anti-British”, but his British counterparts did not think so.⁴¹² After meeting Hoskins in Cairo during his earlier mission to the Middle East in 1942, British minister of state, Richard Casey, reported that he “made a good impression on me and

⁴⁰⁶ Von Joseph Gabriell, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Middle East: Missionary Influence on American Policy 1827 to 1910* University of (United States: Minnesota Press, 1971) p. 286

⁴⁰⁷ PRO: CO 733/443/19 E 1771/532. Baxter to Hayter, March 14, 1943.

⁴⁰⁸ PRO: HS 3/166. Copy of report from Brigadier General J.R. Deane to Colonel William J. Donovan, November 6, 1942. Along with his mission in 1943, a work which covers Hoskins’ journey to the Middle East in 1942, see Louis Rapoport, *Shake Heaven & Hell*, pp. 95-99.

⁴⁰⁹ Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East- 1919-1945*, p. 75.

⁴¹⁰ See, Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1985).

⁴¹¹ PRO: CO 733/443/18. Minute by W.S. Battershill, June 16, 1943.

⁴¹² Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East: 1919-1945*, p. 75.

showed every sign of wishing to co-operate”.⁴¹³ Months later in March 1943, a Foreign Office report described Hoskins no less a “high minded Arabophile, fundamentally friendly and *not* anti-British”.⁴¹⁴ What troubled Hoskins the most were not his relations with British authorities in this context, but his own misgivings about the mission.

Interestingly, Roosevelt had selected an envoy who believed that Ibn Saud had a limited role to play in Palestine. Placing the King in front of public scrutiny in such a fashion, Hoskins this time concurred with previous points made by his NEA colleagues. He felt that his mission ran the risk of showing Ibn Saud as *other*-worldly in the sense of an arcane Arab chieftain out of step with the modern world.⁴¹⁵ Hoskins’ thoughts in this respect were also in line with those of the British and the head of the Foreign Office’s Near East Department there, C.W. Baxter, who opined:

“Ibn Saud should be kept completely out of all Mediterranean problems since he was not profoundly interested in them and did not get on particularly well with the Jewish State and would only complicate matters by allowing himself to be drawn in. He was getting on very amicably at the moment with his both British and American officials and nothing should be done to upset his happy arrangement”.⁴¹⁶

Since backing away from the recommendations of the 1936-1937 Peel Commission, a trend in British policymaking had been to craft a pro-Arab policy in Palestine precisely to bolster Britain’s imperial position in the Middle East, which could be accomplished mainly through winning the friendship of Arab leaders like Ibn Saud.⁴¹⁷ Now, British authorities would be backing a plan that would ask the Saudi Arabian king to approve a policy that was overtly pro-Zionist. Moreover, it also meant that London would have to deal with the loud protests coming from their Hashemite allies in Jordan and Iraq, who would never accede to a Saudi-led

⁴¹³ PRO: HS 3/166. Casey to Foreign Office, November 6, 1942.

⁴¹⁴ PRO: CO 733/443/19 E 1771/532. Baxter to Hayter, March 14, 1943.

⁴¹⁵ SML: Harold Hoskins Papers, Box 1, Folder 35, ‘Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins’, August 31, 1943.

⁴¹⁶ PRO: CO/733/433/18. ‘Harold Hoskins’ Baxter to Hayter, March 14, 1943. As early as May 21, 1943, Hoskins suggested the same advice to Weizmann adding that rather “*try and use some of the Egyptian leaders as intermediaries*” because they were “*sufficiently objective*” as non-Arab Moslems. See Litvinoff, *Letters of Chaim Weizmann*, p. 509.

⁴¹⁷ Daniel Silverfarb, ‘Britain and Saudi Arabia on the Eve of the Second World War’ *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October, 1983) p 404. The Peel Commission was a British inquiry that controversially recommended partition for Palestine. See, Earl Peel (William Peel) ‘The Report of the Palestine Commission’ *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 5(Sept., 1937) pp. 761-779.

Palestinian solution on behalf of all Arabs.⁴¹⁸ Although the British Government was anxious to reach a lasting settlement in Palestine, the Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley argued that it was a mistake for the British Government to “press” Ibn Saud to “do anything which might make it more difficult for him to retain the prestige and respect which he now enjoys in the Arab World”.⁴¹⁹ However, taking into consideration the need to promote Anglo-American unity, the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden ended up reluctantly accepting the Hoskins Mission, but only as long it adhered to two specific corollaries. The first was that “no suggestions involving territorial alterations in other Arab countries should be put forward to him (Ibn Saud)”. The second and final point was that “his conversations should be purely exploratory in nature and should not in any way prejudice the interests of other Arab countries; and the visit should be carried out as unobtrusively as possible”.⁴²⁰

But what would in the end prove to be the greatest roadblock of turning Ibn Saud into an Allied pro-consul was the sheer conviction of the King’s own sentiments over Palestine. As early as May 1941 Sir Vivian Gabriel, former intelligence officer in the Middle East, British Air Mission representative and British attaché in Washington DC, had warned that Chaim Weizmann’s Zionist politicking in the United States was causing, “unfortunate repercussions” in Saudi Arabia with Ibn Saud.⁴²¹ In 1943, when *Life Magazine* published an extensive profile on Ibn Saud, it seemed to validate the King’s arrival on the international stage, but the primary gist of the article had been his public condemnation over the Allied treatment of Palestine.⁴²² British officials had already received a disturbing report in 1943 compiled by Saudi officials revealing that the King had shared with the American envoy, Patrick Hurley, that he “hated Jews more than anyone”.⁴²³ His complete opposition to Zionism was a prominent aspect of Ibn Saud’s own iconography, something that for those who were pushing Hoskins’ mission seemed to have

⁴¹⁸ According to a Turkish report intercepted by British Intelligence, to put a stop to King Abdullah of Transjordan’s visions of leading a “Greater Syria” that included Palestine, the King of Egypt and the President of Syria proposed that Ibn Saud should accept the mantle of Arab leadership. See, PRO: HW1/3610 142412, Foreign Minister in Hungary to Turkish Legation Cairo, March 16 1945. The scholar Maurice Labelle has dealt with Saudi Arabia’s rivalry with the Hashemites *vis a vis* Palestine, but his work covers the period between 1945 and 1949. See Maurice Labelle, ‘“The Only Thorn”: Early Saudi-American Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1945-1949’ *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (April, 2011) p. 288.

⁴¹⁹ PRO: CO 733/443/18. George Gater to V.G. Glenday, July 29, 1943.

⁴²⁰ PRO: CO 733/443/18 E 3464/87/31. Anthony Eden to John G. Winant, July 24, 1943.

⁴²¹ NARA: RG 59, Lot File # 57 D 298, Box 15, Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. Memorandum of Conversation between Alling & Moffett, May 13, 1941.

⁴²² *Life Magazine*, ‘The King of Arabia’, May 31, 1943.

⁴²³ PRO: FO 371/3516 E 3326/3326/25. Jeddah to Foreign Office, May 31, 1943.

clearly underestimated. As the British Foreign Office official R.M.A Hankey would bluntly point out afterwards: “Anyone who thinks Ibn Saud will look at this hair brained scheme after what he has said about it (Palestine) must be quite cracked”.⁴²⁴ In this respect, once again, the United States and British Governments were forced to confront the obvious ambiguities of Ibn Saud’s influence. Paradoxically, the political prestige that resulted from his position as independent Arab statesman and defender of Islam were the very aspects of Ibn Saud’s private and public feelings and image, which would prevent him from taking on the role that the White House and Downing Street had envisioned for him in Palestine.

Leading up to Hoskins’ meeting with Ibn Saud, in July of 1943, the political atmosphere was intense as Zionist pressure had put a stop to a joint Anglo-American statement on Palestine, which further outlined President Roosevelt’s “full consultation” formula.⁴²⁵ The fear that the United States Government had become too associated with Zionist interests was at this time expressed by the British High Commissioner in Palestine, Sir Harold MacMichael. He cautioned that it would be “undesirable that any member of the British Legation should accompany him (Hoskins) to Riyadh, or interpret at his audiences”, and that the presence of a British official would associate HMG so closely with what is intended to be a purely American initiative...⁴²⁶ As a nephew of Lord Curzon and an expert on British rule in Anglo-Sudan, MacMichael was concerned about the Hoskins Mission disturbing Britain’s informal empire in the Middle East.⁴²⁷ Nevertheless, with the Palestine issue reverberating as a source for so much rancour, London nevertheless gave instructions to MacMichael to work with the Americans and to do “everything possible to facilitate Colonel Hoskins’ mission”.⁴²⁸ From this point of view, a larger balance sheet was being considered by British officials, measuring Allied solidarity against issues that added up in Saudi Arabia to quite a few concerns that had wider ramifications throughout the Middle East. What must be remembered, however, is that despite the fact of MacMichael’s protestations and Britain’s understandable apprehension, the Hoskins’ inquiry would be undertaken as a joint effort, a scheme that involved Anglo-American co-action.

⁴²⁴ PRO: FO 371 401 39. Minute by R.M.A. Hankey, January 25, 1944.

⁴²⁵ PRO: CO/733/443/18. Colonial Office report, November 16, 1943. For a detailed account of the joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine in 1943, see Penkovar, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*, pp. 145-175.

⁴²⁶ PRO: CO 733/443/19 E 3464/87/31. Missive by Secretary of Colonies to Palestine Sir Harold MacMichael, July, 25, 1943.

⁴²⁷ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Sir Harold Alfred MacMichael, by M.W. Daly, (Britain: Oxford University Press, 2004-2006).

⁴²⁸ PRO: CO 733/443/19 E 3464/87/31. Missive by Secretary of Colonies to Palestine Sir Harold MacMichael, July, 25, 1943.

Arriving in Saudi Arabia in the beginning of August, Harold Hoskins was left with the difficult task of arranging a meeting between Ibn Saud and Chaim Weizmann, or a representative of the Jewish Agency.⁴²⁹ In a display of Anglo-American unity, the British legation's best Arabist, John Wall, helped Hoskins with drafting the American envoy's controversial request. Despite the level of disquietude in both the lower strata of the State Department and the Foreign Office, the Hoskins mission had transformed into a dual Anglo-American effort. Presented to the Saudi Arabian King on August 11, 1943, the letter drawn up by Hoskins and Wall stated that both the British and the American Government's policies concerning Palestine was "to postpone as far as possible until the Axis has been defeated...the many territorial boundary problems that exist" and that the "most pressing objective is to win the war".⁴³⁰ To limit the possible offense caused by any suggestion that Ibn Saud had any knowledge of the Philby Plan, Hoskins let it be known that *both* "Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt would be derelict in their duties if they overlooked any plan...before the end of the war to a friendly and peaceful solution of the Palestine problem..."⁴³¹

Coming as no surprise to Hoskins, when he spoke to Ibn Saud face to face without an interpreter, the Saudi Arabian King let it be known to the American envoy that any scheme reminiscent of the Philby plan of 1939, would be considered a "criminal affront" that would make him a "traitor against [his] religion and country".⁴³² The notion of assuming the mantle of Caliphate in the context of Second World War geopolitics meant little to Ibn Saud; "a loud voice with an empty belly," said the king.⁴³³ Instead of discussing Palestine, Ibn Saud shifted the topic to more local matters, ones that he believed to be of greater importance. These included how the United States and Britain intended to address Saudi Arabia's currency troubles and raise the Government's income from the Hajj.⁴³⁴ Using the influence of Ibn Saud for the purpose of

⁴²⁹ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, Hull to Hoskins, July 7, 1943, p. 796.

⁴³⁰ PRO: FO CO/733/443/18. Copy of Memorandum of Conversation from Hoskins to Ibn Saud, Wikeley to Eden, August 11, 1943.

⁴³¹ PRO: FO CO/733/443/18. Copy of Memorandum of Conversation from Hoskins to Ibn Saud, Wikeley to Eden, August 11, 1943.

⁴³² PRO: CO 733/443/19. Copy of Memorandum of Conversation between Ibn Saud and Colonel Hoskins (translated Arab Text approved by the King) August 16, 1943.

⁴³³ PRO: CO 733/443/19. Copy of Memorandum of Conversation between Ibn Saud and Colonel Hoskins (translated Arab Text approved by the King) August 16, 1943.

⁴³⁴ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Kirk to State Department, September 4, 1943. The subjects mentioned above will be further covered in Chapter V.

forwarding Allied interests evidently had its limits. Hoskins was correct in thinking that Ibn Saud would be unwilling to trade in his political legitimacy as an independent Arab leader for an ill-conceived Anglo-American scheme that might possibly sow the seeds of his own downfall. In this respect, one gets the sense that Hoskins' principal motive for trekking all the way to Saudi Arabia was to confirm his own shrewd assessment of the situation. After returning home from a mission, Hoskins emphatically wrote to his colleagues at the State Department on August 31, 1943: "I am convinced that there never was any possibility of acceptance (of the plan) and there is none today".⁴³⁵

Regarding Anglo-American relations, the lesson drawn from the mission by Hoskins was that it confirmed to him that in the Middle East, far from usurping Britain as the premier regional power, the United States would at least for the foreseeable future need to depend on its wartime ally. On his return from Saudi Arabia in September, Hoskins made several recommendations on this score to the president.⁴³⁶ Regardless of his mission's failure, Hoskins wanted to make clear to Roosevelt that no country possessed the experience or the administrators "required to handle the exceptionally difficult job of governing Palestine" quite like the British Government.⁴³⁷ When it came to drawing up policy involving individual Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Hoskins stressed that the United States should emulate British authorities. The Kingdom should be viewed through a regional prism, taking into account "Muslim attitudes in neighbouring Middle Eastern states as well as North Africa, India and even Russia and China".⁴³⁸ Despite the wartime rise of American power, Hoskins' final piece of advice emphasized Britain's experience in the region and the two countries' strategic interdependence, leading him to recommend that the United States should seek an "agreement on joint Anglo-American policy to be applied in [the] Middle East..."⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, 'Memorandum by Lieutenant Harold B. Hoskins', August 31, 1943, pp. 807-810.

⁴³⁶ During his meeting with Roosevelt, Hoskins gave him a gift from Ibn Saud. Hearing that Roosevelt was a keen philatelist, the King sent him a box of Saudi Arabian stamps. See, FDRPL: Franklin Roosevelt Papers, PPF 7960, Roosevelt to Ibn Saud, February 10, 1944.

⁴³⁷ FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa* 'Palestine Question', Memorandum by Gordon Merriam in reference to Hoskins conversation with the President on September 27, 1943. October 15, 1943, pp. 816-821.

⁴³⁸ FRUS. Vol. IV, 'Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins', August 31, 1943, p. 809.

⁴³⁹ NARA: RG 250/49/32/-05 Entry 1435, Box 1, Lot File No. 78, D 440. 'Report on Trip to England of Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins, A.U.S.' December 14, 1943.

Later that same year in November 1943, Hoskins would again cross the Atlantic to meet with key members of the British policymaking establishment in London.⁴⁴⁰ He first had a prickly parley with the Undersecretary of State for the Foreign Office, Sir Maurice Peterson, discussing the former's meeting with Ibn Saud. Peterson informed Hoskins that: "HMG certainly had no wish to contest the American desire to play a greater part than hitherto in the Middle East", but he had also made it very clear that the United States would be venturing into a territory of the world that was unmistakably a British domain.⁴⁴¹ In the Middle East, Peterson asserted that there was "already a political regime in that part of the world built by HMG". Peterson continued: "it had worked well during the war except for the Iraqi revolt...we would not wish to scrap it".⁴⁴² Peterson was critical towards Hoskins' mission and Washington's contradictory Middle East policies in general. He was annoyed by the way the Americans were putting pressure on British authorities to allow more Jewish immigration into Palestine, while at the same time preparing to equip Ibn Saud with arms, which might be used for "cutting Jewish and British throats in Palestine".⁴⁴³ Although there was no evidence that weapons purchased by American aid were being funnelled into Palestine from Saudi Arabia, Peterson's acerbic comments illustrate how the question of Ibn Saud's regional influence could quickly lead to discord between the two wartime allies.

Hoskins did not completely disagree with his British counterpart. He was painfully aware of the fact that the hasty and misguided attempt to insert Ibn Saud into the Palestine equation had been the cause of some friction between the two allies. But even though a majority of British officials were sceptical of the mission, the members of HMG that Hoskins met with were nonetheless enthusiastic about the possibilities of greater Anglo-American cooperation. There was a growing realization that crisis points such as Palestine drained British resources and could no longer be put aside by endless royal commissions. What was needed was further American participation to shore up Britain's flagging regional power. Hoskins went on to have a friendly

⁴⁴⁰ Besides meeting with key members of the British Government, Hoskins dined at the estate of the Duke of Devonshire, while also having conversations on his mission with Chaim Weizmann and St. John Philby. The meeting with Philby proved particularly uncomfortable. Speaking of Ibn Saud's former advisor, Hoskins wrote, "*I came away with the impression of a violent and passionate man who thought that he was being completely honest in laying about him against anyone who did not agree with him or whom he felt had attached him.*" See, NARA: RG 250/49/32/-05 Entry 1435, Box 1, Lot File No. 78, D 440. 'Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. St. John Philby', November, 15, 1943.

⁴⁴¹ PRO: CO 733/443/19. Minutes of Hoskins and Petersen Meeting, November 9, 1943.

⁴⁴² PRO: CO 733/443/19. Minutes of Hoskins and Petersen Meeting, November 9, 1943.

⁴⁴³ PRO: CO 733/443/19. Minutes of Hoskins and Petersen Meeting, November 9, 1943.

meeting with Richard Law, Minister of State and Churchill's Parliamentary Private Secretary, who afterwards spoke for many British officials at the time, when he told the prime minister that "it would be a tremendous advantage to us to invoke the Americans as association in our policy towards Palestine".⁴⁴⁴ Another British official, Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley, consoled Hoskins, telling him that the "plan of using Ibn Saud was one that had come from the prime minister" and his mission had been useful in that it finally "cleared up the matter".⁴⁴⁵ Before heading back to the United States, Hoskins met with Anthony Eden allowing him the chance to explain that with regard to the Anglo-American relationship in the Middle East, American activities in the region could be thought of in terms of "a junior partnership, but definitely of a partnership".⁴⁴⁶ In the larger context, the lasting effect of the Hoskins Mission had shown British and American policymakers that working in concert, be it Palestine or in Saudi Arabia, held the promise of promoting the long-term national interests of both parties. As will be seen in the upcoming chapters, Saudi Arabia therefore increasingly became the cornerstone of an Anglo-American diplomatic approach in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The story of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia cannot be fully told without investigating the Hoskins Mission and the proposal to place Ibn Saud at the heart of the Palestine problem.⁴⁴⁷ There are three key observations that can be made about this episode which explain how the wartime alliance operated in the Kingdom. Firstly, the Hoskins Mission shows the extent to which the conduct of the wartime alliance with regard to Ibn Saud was interwoven with Allied interests that stretched well beyond the Kingdom. The second important observation to take from the Mission was that Ibn Saud's prestige and persona carried only so much weight. The Hoskins Mission exposed the enigma of Saudi Arabia's "benevolent neutrality". Asking the King, whom the journalist Drew Pearson described in 1943 as the "most powerful of the Arabs",

⁴⁴⁴ PRO: CO 733 443 19. Richard Law to Churchill, November 9, 1943. Law had also tried to organize a meeting between Hoskins & Churchill, but failed. Writing to Law the next day, the prime minister stated, "*Alas I cannot see him. My opinions on this question are the result of long reflection and are not likely to undergo any change. I will talk to the President about it when we meet.*"

⁴⁴⁵ NARA: RG 250/49/32/-05 Entry 1435, Box 1, Lot File No. 78, D 440. 'Memorandum of Conversation with Colonel Oliver Stanley', November 17, 1943.

⁴⁴⁶ NARA: RG 250/49/32/-05 Entry 1435, Box 1, Lot File No. 78, D 440. 'Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. Eden', November 22, 1943.

⁴⁴⁷ FO 371/35163 E 3326/3326/25. 'Personality Report' Jeddah to Foreign, May 31, 1943.

to support the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine under a cagey *quid pro quo* would have forced Ibn Saud into an untenable political position.⁴⁴⁸ On a policymaking level, the Foreign Office and the State Department shared a similar view. Involving the King in such a daring scheme would only succeed in jeopardizing regional stability. Certainly, Ibn Saud had a political role to play in the region, but being the Arab arbiter in Palestine was not one of them. From this perspective, seeking to exert the extraterritorial influence of Ibn Saud, which had originally drawn the two powers to Saudi Arabia, in reality turned out to be decidedly double-edged.

The third and final point is that although the Hoskins Mission failed to solve the political crisis in Palestine, it underscored the interdependent facets of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. However, as the United States rose from its junior partner status, relations between the two wartime allies in Saudi Arabia were becoming more formalized, and also more complex. Following the military victories that had largely swept away the Axis threat in the Middle East, Britain and the United States now had to jointly construct a bilateral partnership without the overriding consideration of wartime exigency. The next chapter analyzes Anglo-American relations inside the Kingdom in the context of this change and will examine conditions on the ground, where British and American officials faced the sizeable challenge of constructing a partnership that balanced the separate national interests of the two countries.

⁴⁴⁸ *Washington Post*, 'The Washington Merry-Go-Round', August 9, 1943.

Chapter V

Anglo-American Relations inside Saudi Arabia, 1943 to 1944

Introduction

The initial stages of the Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia were built on the need to procure the influence of Ibn Saud. With his influence having expanded all the way to Palestine in 1943, that same year British and American policymakers were now faced with two crucial issues pertaining to the domestic sphere of Saudi Arabia, issues which would also raise questions of hegemonic rivalry between Britain and the United States. This chapter sets out to examine what one scholar has labelled Washington's "crude diplomacy," a set of initiatives designed to consolidate American oil interests in the Kingdom. The United States' decision to grant Lend-Lease aid to Ibn Saud and establish the Petroleum Reserves Corporation (PRC) at different points of time strained Anglo-American relations. Yet, the chapter also considers other controversies pertaining to the oil question that were far more contested, most notably the turf wars between American officials in Washington and the government's heated battle with the American oil industry. In fact, contrary to conventional wisdom, authorities in Washington and London were largely united in their belief that it took close collaboration to bring order to the "frontier" that was the Middle East oil bonanza.⁴⁴⁹ Saudi Arabian oil would be instrumental in bringing about the ambitious Anglo-American Oil Agreement in the summer of 1944, a measure calling for the coordination of British and American oil policies in the region.

The Anglo-American debate that surfaced over how to fix Saudi Arabia's broken finances was a much more contentious issue between the allies. British and American officials had been trying to answer this question since 1941. The time had now come for action, and both parties were committed to implementing a plan to address the problem in earnest. Both powers agreed that the Saudi Arabian Government needed to mend the country's currency system, and brought to the forefront the thorny question of who would oversee these reforms. Another economic concern which was interrelated, was the fact that the British, who had been the major provider of wartime subsidies, were now sensing that this expansion of largesse was

⁴⁴⁹ For studies on the dynamics between Middle East oil and Anglo-American relations, see Introduction, p. 15-17.

inadvertently undermining the stability of Ibn Saud's sovereign rule. The new British minister in Jeddah, Stanley Jordan, adamantly argued that subsidies had mutated into a corrupting presence and that Britain and the United States were perceived as "milch cows" by Saudi Arabian officials.⁴⁵⁰ Acknowledging the merits of the British arguments over subsidies, nonetheless, the Americans came to a different conclusion. On balance, they thought the subsidies were effective as they benefited the Kingdom's economic conditions for the present, and more importantly, contributed to cementing Saudi-American relations for the future. Although the subsidy question would remain a source of tension, in the summer of 1944, Britain and the United States did take steps to further integrate their policies by finding a joint agreement in which each country would come to terms acceptable to both parties, and allow each country to equally provide subsidies to the Kingdom.

While the subject of oil and Saudi Arabia's finances sowed the seeds of disharmony, there is a question which historians have yet to sufficiently acknowledge or address. Why were British and American officials at this juncture able to overlook these significant differences? With the wartime alliance, in the words of Warren Kimball, in a state of "suspended animation" in the spring of 1944, the recognition of the overriding importance of strategic interdependence went a long way to reconciling the differences between the two powers.⁴⁵¹ On the eve of *Operation Overlord*, the emphasis placed on the need for bilateral cooperation that had been stressed during the Stettinius Mission and Anglo-American oil talks in April and May of that year was ultimately brought to bear on Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom was still being eyed as an anchor for greater regional cooperation between Britain and the United States. But whereas interpersonal relationships had once been a strongpoint of Anglo-American collaboration in Saudi Arabia, policymakers acknowledged that the "lack of liaison" now occurring on the ground in Jeddah, specifically between Stanley Jordan and James Moose, needed to be addressed. A legitimate concern had emerged on both sides of the Atlantic that the disagreements between Britain and the United States sprang - not from an incompatibility of ideology or interests - but rather had to do with a clash of personalities; a reality which forces one to rethink the conception of Saudi Arabia as strictly being a playing field for Anglo-American competition.

⁴⁵⁰ PRO: FO 921/191 25(11)44/21. Jordan to Eden, March 15, 1944.

⁴⁵¹ Kimball, *Forged in War*, pg. 261.

Anglo-American Relations, the United States & Saudi Arabian Oil

To ascertain how Saudi Arabia's oil reserves impacted on Anglo-American relations, one must first look to the events of February 18, 1943. On that day, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8926, which declared that Saudi Arabia was eligible for Lend-Lease.⁴⁵² Concerned with preserving the neutrality of the United States as well as Saudi Arabia, Washington had withheld Lend-Lease aid in 1941, a decision made easier by the fact that Britain was subsidizing Ibn Saud to keep the King inside the Allied fold. By 1943, however, the previous calculus had dramatically changed as the United States had been fighting as a belligerent power on a global scale for over a year. This is where the Kingdom fitted into a framework of policy outlined by a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) report from that year. It stressed that the United States' primary objective was "to conduct a strategic offensive against the Axis in European-Mediterranean Theatre, employing the maximum forces consistent with maintaining and extending unremitting pressure against Japan".⁴⁵³ Taken from this view, Admiral William Leahy, Chief of Staff to President Roosevelt, would observe in 1943 that Saudi Arabia would become "practically essential to any successful (military) campaign by the Americans" in that he foresaw it as a location that would allow for the conveyance of troops and materiel, while its oil installations provided a safeguard against future fuel shortages.⁴⁵⁴

In this respect, as the Second World War went on, American policymakers had become concerned that wartime oil consumption had unalterably reduced the country's domestic reserves. By 1943, the United States accounted for roughly 70% of the world's oil output. "It require [d] four to five tons of petroleum to drop one ton of bombs on Berlin," proclaimed the Truman Committee, an influential Senatorial body that investigated waste in the United States' war effort. Looking towards the post-war world, in peacetime, the average American consumed thirty times as much petroleum as the world average, six times as much as the average of a Briton and nine times as much as the average Russian.⁴⁵⁵ In May 1943, a memorandum prepared

⁴⁵² Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 70, 245.

⁴⁵³ NARA: RG 218 190 1 74 Box 316, Entry UD1. 'Current British Policy and Strategies Rel. to that of the US', May 8, 1943.

⁴⁵⁴ William Leahy, *I Was There* (London, 1950) p. 219. Diary Entry, September 14, 1943.

⁴⁵⁵ See, NARA: RG 59 250 46 35 04 Box 3 Entry 670. Truman Committee Report 'The Future of the US in the World Petroleum Economy', 1944.

by the Department of the Navy for the JCS caused alarm by announcing that the proven oil reserves of the United States were only at 20 billion (42 gallon) barrels and dwindling at a rate faster than new sources were being found.⁴⁵⁶ As early as January 1941, British officials in London were also concerned about the “heavy strain imposed by the very high level of U.S.A consumption”, holding it to be important that their wartime ally start developing the “high promise of the petroliferous areas in the Middle East”.⁴⁵⁷

In June of 1943, the Roosevelt Administration established the Petroleum Reserves Corporation (PRC), which was to be chaired by the Secretary of the Interior and Petroleum Administrator, Harold Ickes. In many respects, the PRC emulated the so-called “British model”.⁴⁵⁸ Ever since the British Government had become the majority stakeholder of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1913, London had openly owned direct interests in oil companies and provided them with diplomatic and military support.⁴⁵⁹ Emphasizing the importance of state control, the PRC’s first order of business would be to secure oil resources outside of the continental United States. Given that the proven oil reserves in Saudi Arabia at this time were estimated to be in excess of 22 billion barrels, and that the concession was held by an American company, CASOC, the PRC’s attention quickly turned to the oil situation in the Kingdom.⁴⁶⁰

Leading up to the announcement of the PRC, the dominant question in Washington can be summed up by Max Thornburg, who was serving as a special consultant on “oil matters” for the State Department. Writing to his colleague Herbert Feis, chairman of the Committee on International Petroleum Policy (CIPP), Thornburg noted: “our facts tell us that if we recognize a national interest in Saudi Arabia’s oil development, we ourselves need to see to its well being- through the British if they wish- otherwise despite them”.⁴⁶¹ With wartime considerations ensuring the close alliance of the two powers, the Anglo-American War Planning Group (AAWPG) which included the JCS, approved a scheme to construct an oil refinery in Saudi

⁴⁵⁶ It was believed at this time by American officials that the country’s domestic oil reserves had a “relatively short life span” running out in the mid 1950s, see *The New Statesman*, ‘Oil and Politics’, April 22, 1944.

⁴⁵⁷ The British Library (BL) India Office Records (IOR): IOR: R/15/1/700. ‘The Future of Oil in its Relation to the Middle East’ Memorandum prepared by the Admiralty, Peel to Caroe, Secretary of Government OF India External Affairs Department, January 15, 1941.

⁴⁵⁸ “Next to winning the war,” Ickes told the President at the time, “the most important matter before us as a nation is the world oil situation”. See Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, p 39. For more information on Harold Ickes’ influence, see Stephen J. Randall, ‘Harold Ickes and United States Foreign Petroleum Policy Planning, 1939-1945’ *The Business History Review*, Volume 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1983).

⁴⁵⁹ A. Davis Miller, *Search for Security*, Intro XV.

⁴⁶⁰ Anderson, *Aramco, the United States & Saudi Arabia*, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁶¹ Library of Congress (LC): Loy Henderson Papers. Box 12. Thornburg to Feis, May 26, 1943.

Arabia. Its purpose was to produce 130 octane aviation fuels “based on anticipation of military supply needs in the Southwest Pacific”.⁴⁶² In addition, the Foreign Office at the time also appreciated the strategic value of CASOC “whose operations are in themselves of some importance to the war effort.”⁴⁶³

With this wartime dimension at play, most American authorities dealing with the Saudi Arabian oil issue did not view the British as a menacing presence in the shadows. Speaking with a group of senators in Washington, Cordell Hull confirmed that even the management at CASOC never truly “intimated... that they feared the British were trying to steal the concession in that territory”.⁴⁶⁴ Herbert Feis, an American official who arguably followed the issue the closest during the Second World War, believed that the accusations that Britain was trying to usurp American oil concessions in Saudi Arabia were built on sensationalism and were in reality entirely “baseless”.⁴⁶⁵ Indeed, much of the deliberation in Washington surrounding the PRC at this time, according to him had been “to get [the] correct public presentation in the eyes particularly of the British (Government)”, so not to upset the United States’ closest wartime ally.⁴⁶⁶

Still, there continued to be a group of American officials who harboured doubts regarding British intentions in Saudi Arabia. No American figure acted in as paranoid a manner as the roving American Ambassador William Bullitt, who in 1943 told Harold Ickes that “he wouldn’t put it past the British to have King Ibn Saud assassinated if necessary and set up a puppet who would see the oil situation through their eyes”.⁴⁶⁷ Although not nearly as hyperbolic, to Harold Ickes the creation of the PRC had been necessary to “counteract certain known activities of a foreign power which presently are jeopardizing American interests in Arabian oil reserves...”.⁴⁶⁸ The unspoken threat that Ickes referred to was “America’s closest wartime ally, Great Britain”, according to Barry Rubin. Using this example, the scholar makes Ickes the centrepiece of his argument that “nowhere else...did the conflict of (Anglo-American relations)

⁴⁶² FRUS 1943. Vol. IV, *The Near East and Africa*, Feis to Hull, July 26, 1943, pp. 933-934.

⁴⁶³ IOR: R/15/2/538. Foreign Office to Jeddah, May 4, 1944.

⁴⁶⁴ NARA: RG 38 370 14 13 3, Box 5. ‘Memorandum of Conversation; Oil Matters in the Near East’, Senator Maloney, Richard Joyce Smith & Cordell Hull, May 10, 1944.

⁴⁶⁵ LSE Library: Pamphlet Collection, HD9/605. Herbert Feis, ‘Petroleum and American Foreign Policy’ p. 43.

⁴⁶⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 8. Feis to Hull, October 8, 1943.

⁴⁶⁷ Library of Congress (LC): Harold Ickes Diaries, Microfilm, Reel 6. May 29, 1943.

⁴⁶⁸ Rubin, ‘Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945’, p 253.

reach the heights it attained in Saudi Arabia”.⁴⁶⁹ Without question, Ickes was an influential figure in the Roosevelt Administration, but as a measuring stick to gauge the state of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, he falls short.⁴⁷⁰

To understand Ickes’ role in the Anglo-American oil drama, it is important to realize his overarching *modus operandi*. Known for his bombastic personality, during the war, Ickes received acclaim and notoriety for writing a book called *Fightin’ Oil*, in which he portrayed himself as acting as America’s first oil czar. He would later go as far as to tell the president that the idea of Washington getting involved in the oil business was “his baby”.⁴⁷¹ From this angle, true or not, the idea that Britain was somehow a threat in Saudi Arabia was in this instance exploited by Ickes as a decoy to compel the United States into playing a greater role in that country’s oil sector. Only a year later, he would maintain to the Undersecretary of State, Edward Stettinius, that cooperation with British officials over oil issues in the Middle East were “essential”.⁴⁷² For an ardent New Dealer like Ickes, that when it came to the United States long-term oil security, the government’s main priority would be best served by keeping a closer eye on the intrigue of private oil companies, not Britain.

Despite a Foreign Office report written earlier in the war that had marked oil as being “almost a controlling factor in determining future British policy in the Middle East,” London’s perception of Ibn Saud’s kingdom had not been measured by gallons of oil, but rather by the influence it wielded in the Arab world and throughout the British Empire.⁴⁷³ The scant oil concession that Britain held in Saudi Arabia was located on the Farasan Islands in the Red Sea, which had already been abandoned by 1942. British oil interests in the Middle East instead cantered on Iraq, Kuwait and Iran; the latter containing the world’s largest oil refinery at the time

⁴⁶⁹ Rubin, ‘Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945’, p 253.

⁴⁷⁰ Rubin is not the only scholar to use Ickes as a symbol of Anglo-American discord. According to Wm. Roger Louis, Ickes’ main priority was to “(strike) out against British Imperialism.” See, Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*, pp. 185-186. For other examples, see Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 120. Irvine Anderson and Aaron David Miller come close to capturing Ickes’ views on Anglo-American relations and his New Dealer mentality. See, Anderson, *Aramco, The United States and Saudi Arabia*, p. 73. Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 94-95.

⁴⁷¹ NARA: RG 38/ 370/ 14/ 13/ 3 Box 5. Ickes to Roosevelt, December 31, 1943.

⁴⁷² NARA: RG 59/250/34/13/4 Box 5809. ‘Telephone Conversation between Harold Ickes and Edward Stettinius’, June 3, 1944.

⁴⁷³ PRO: FO 371/24549. Report by A.C. Hearn, ‘*The Future of Oil in its Relation to the Middle East*’, November 10, 1940.

in Abadan. In this respect, London felt that it could do without Saudi Arabian oil.⁴⁷⁴ Even the State Department acknowledged at this time that Ibn Saud would not offer Britain the Kingdom's oil concession because to protect their own oil interests in Iraq and Iran, the British sought "to prevent its [Saudi Arabian oil] immediate development [rather] than to stimulate it," a move that would in the process benefit other independent American oil companies that were competing with CASOC.⁴⁷⁵

Yet, in October of 1943, the American legation in Jeddah accused the new British minister Stanley Jordan of pestering Saudi Arabian officials to see if they had copies of the original oil agreement that Ibn Saud signed with CASOC. American officials in Washington wondered aloud if Jordan's enthusiasm in this regard was "merely an aberrant reflection of coordinated Anglo-American plans", or whether it was an expression of British intent to latch on to the American concession.⁴⁷⁶ As Stanley Jordan would later write to the Foreign Office in 1944, His Majesty's Government had purposely left oil development to the United States with the direct purpose of hoping to extinguish any sense of oil rivalry in the country.⁴⁷⁷ Thus, British policy makers for the rest of the war regarded it as imperative not to adopt a "dog in the manger attitude" towards America's long-term development of Saudi Arabia. If Britain took this stubborn tack, the effect would be "disastrous" for the maintenance of sound Anglo-American relations.⁴⁷⁸

What one notices when examining the controversies surrounding Saudi Arabian oil and Anglo-American relations is that it was far less volatile than the highly charged dispute that was taking place concurrently in the United States, between those who supported the government's intervention in the oil business against those who felt such views ran counter to the country's Laissez-Faire economic approach.⁴⁷⁹ There were American officials who strongly felt that the absence of governmental interference had been one of the main reasons why an American oil

⁴⁷⁴ See J. Cable, *Intervention at Abadan: Plan Buccaneer* (Hong Kong: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991) pp. 9-19. B. Schwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers* & S. Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations and Cold War Oil: Crisis in Iran* (Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁴⁷⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. 'Some Observations on the Saudi Arabian Problem', November 3, 1944.

⁴⁷⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Kirk to State Department, October 13, 1943.

⁴⁷⁷ PRO: FO 371/ 45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 22, 1945.

⁴⁷⁸ PRO: FO/921/192. Jordan to Foreign Office, September 29, 1944.

⁴⁷⁹ Irvine Anderson, *Aramco, The United States and Saudi Arabia*, p. 100.

company like CASOC had won over Ibn Saud in the 1930s.⁴⁸⁰ In this respect, the same factors that had guided the wartime alliance's policy in Saudi Arabia were also at play with regard to the oil question. Articulating the importance of restraint, Alexander Kirk warned that "overt American Government intervention in oil operation in SA would lend to tar us with the same brush" as an aggressive imperial power.⁴⁸¹

Private American oil companies were also wary of Washington entering their line of work. While CASOC had supported the Roosevelt Administration's decision to finally offer Saudi Arabia Lend-Lease, the company's American ownership balked at the PRC's attempt to purchase their concession.⁴⁸² Anticipating that Ickes planned to further nationalize oil production, CASOC's competitors, such as Gulf, Socony-Vacuum and Union Oil, also put pressure on the Roosevelt Administration by publically opposing the PRC.⁴⁸³

Changing course in February 1944, the PRC put forth a preliminary plan in which the United States government would sponsor an oil pipeline across Saudi Arabia that would connect the oil of Ras Tanura in the eastern part of the country to the Mediterranean; an idea foreshadowing the creation of TAPLINE (Trans-Arabian Pipeline) in 1950.⁴⁸⁴ Before the British Government needed to react in any way, the pipeline project was already doomed due to what Lord Halifax described as "vigorous opposition" in the United States.⁴⁸⁵ Senators from oil producing states like Tom Connolly of Texas saw the pipeline as being adversarial to the interests of their constituents, while Elihu Ben-Horin, speaking on behalf of the Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA), noted that such an arrangement would "permanently depress the domestic oil industry which would in turn threaten the safety of the country in the

⁴⁸⁰ As the *Washington Daily News* noted in February 1944, the royalties that the CASOC had offered in 1939 was far "less than government controlled Japanese and German companies." See, *Washington Daily News*, 'Yank Industrialists Outmaneuver Japs and Nazis for Oil Reserves', February 18, 1944.

⁴⁸¹ NARA: RG 59 Entry 456 Box 28. 'First Meeting of Special Committee on Petroleum, Kirk to State Department, July 27, 1943.

⁴⁸² For a more detailed overview of the ARAMCO-US discussions that took place in 1943, see Anderson, *Aramco, the United States & Saudi Arabia*, pp. 56-67.

⁴⁸³ Anderson, *Aramco, the United States & Saudi Arabia*, p. 62.

⁴⁸⁴ For an account of TAPLINE, see Douglass Little, 'Pipeline Politics: America, TAPLINE, and the Arabs', *The Business History Review*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Summer, 1990) pp. 255-285. For a study that covers the strategic dimension leading up to TAPLINE, see, Helmut Mejcher, 'Saudi Arabia's Vital Link to the West: Some Political, Strategic and Tribal Aspects of (TAP) in the Stage of Planning 1942-1950', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Oct., 1982) pp 359-377.

⁴⁸⁵ BL: IOR R/15/1/700. Memorandum, India Office to Bushire, February 14, 1944.

event of future wars”.⁴⁸⁶ Even the oilman Jay Moffett, who had tried to orchestrate Lend-Lease for Saudi Arabia in 1941, now wrote to Cordell Hull arguing that a pipeline owned by the US Government was “a gigantic scandal of the American public and taxpayer”.⁴⁸⁷

While these domestic forces were at play, from a foreign policy perspective, the State Department took a dim view of the pipeline project. Edward Stettinius informed Harold Ickes that he was convinced that it would be “disadvantageous from the viewpoint of our relations with the British.”⁴⁸⁸ In the interval during which the pipeline proposal had come to the fore, Middle Eastern oil had become a tense topic of debate for the wartime alliance. Washington had accused the British Government of manipulating oil prices in the region by bolstering oil production in Iran while cutting back in Iraq. This in turn had angered the American consortium, which owned a 23 ¾ percent share of the Iraq Petroleum company.⁴⁸⁹ Word also reached London that Roosevelt’s Anglophobic envoy, Patrick Hurley, had told the president that he had knowledge of the British Government opposing the pipeline option and the American plan to develop the Saudi Arabian oil concession. As a result, Lord Halifax was forced to meet with American officials in Washington to refute Hurley’s charges as being “entirely erroneous”.⁴⁹⁰

To account for the infighting, the geopolitical situation in the Middle East had changed once the oil shipping lanes of the region were no longer threatened by the Axis. For the upcoming year of 1945, it was estimated that the level of oil production of Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain would increase by 52 percent as compared to 1939. But looking to a productive future, the region’s total oil reserves were conservatively forecast to hold between 15 to 26 billion barrels of oil.⁴⁹¹ It was only natural that the potential to develop Middle East oil reserves was bound to create a set of new inter-allied tensions. President Roosevelt was adamant that something had to be done to squash the unending rumours that Britain “wish[ed] to horn in” on American oil concessions in Saudi Arabia, while concurrently refuting British claims that the United States had “sheep eyes” for Britain’s oil assets in Iran and Iraq.⁴⁹² In this climate of

⁴⁸⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel # 6. Report by the Independent Petroleum Association of America, ‘The Proposed Arabian Pipeline: A Threat to our National Security’, April 28, 1944.

⁴⁸⁷ NARA: RG 38/ 370/ 14/ 13/ 3 Box 5. Moffett to Hull, April 18, 1944.

⁴⁸⁸ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 8. Ickes to Stettinius, June 3, 1944.

⁴⁸⁹ PRO: FO 800/ 431 44/38. Viscount Halifax to Foreign Office, February 20, 1944.

⁴⁹⁰ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. ‘Memorandum of Conversation between Cordell Hull and Lord Halifax’, March 20, 1944.

⁴⁹¹ Miller, *Search for Security*, 124.

⁴⁹² Edited by Warren Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt: the Complete Correspondence II. Alliance Forged* (New Jersey, 1984) p. 744. Roosevelt to Churchill, February 22, 1944, p.744. Roosevelt believed that this issue was of

intrigue and innuendo, Roosevelt persuaded Churchill that the time had come to initiate cabinet level discussions on Middle East oil.

1944 Anglo-American Oil Agreement

Leading up to the Anglo-American oil talks that were to begin in Washington that spring, Simon Davis has said that both countries were trying to avoid a full-out “oil war”.⁴⁹³ But for those who thought the allies were locked in a struggle for oil concessions in Saudi Arabia, the talks in Washington, which were meant to ease those tensions, in fact, highlighted the interdependent qualities of Anglo-American relations. Earlier in 1944, the Truman Committee had been correct in its assertion that from the start of the Second World War “American and British oil resources have been employed jointly” and although the two powers’ “contributions may have been unequal, they have not been inequitable”.⁴⁹⁴ Likewise, in Britain, some members of the War Cabinet had suggested that the Americans were pushing for the oil talks so they could acquire British assets, a view that the Foreign Office considered to be “untrue”. The Near East Department drew attention to the fact that Britain would likely have to call upon US oil reserves for future wars and by having these talks it would put a stop to a “hell for leather race” with the Americans for acquisition of new oil concessions.⁴⁹⁵

Recognizing this need for collaboration, American representatives led by Charles Rayner of the Petroleum Division of the State Department met a British delegation overseen by Sir William Brown, which also included officials from the Petroleum Department, Foreign Office, Treasury and Admiralty. The two parties formally concluded the Anglo-American *Memorandum of Understanding* in Washington on May 3, 1944. For Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, coming

such great importance he offered to “*preside at the first meeting of the joint group to be held in the Cabinet Room of the White House.*” p. 745. Churchill’s response to FDR, see PRO: FO 954/30/C, Microfilm. Churchill to Roosevelt, March 4, 1944. The idea that the British Government covetously eyed Saudi Arabian oil never completely faded away in some quarters of the United States. In a highly publicized visit to Saudi Arabia in October 1945, Senator Claude Pepper and Under Secretary of War John J. McCloy, raised inter-allied tensions by accusing Britain of trying to dislodge America’s top spot in Saudi Arabia’s oil sector in October 1945. Afterwards, Laurence Grafftey-Smith cabled London, describing Pepper’s findings as “*mendacious allegations*” and “*used this bogey officially to obtain Congress approval for the current Lend-Lease programme here (Saudi Arabia).*” See, PRO: FO 371/ 45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 22, 1945.

⁴⁹³ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 156.

⁴⁹⁴ NARA: RG 59 250 46 35 04 Box 3 Entry 670. ‘Truman Committee Additional Report of the Special Committee Investing the National Defense Program: Part I’.

⁴⁹⁵ PRO: FO 954 30 C. Foreign Office Missive, March 6, 1944.

to preliminary terms with the British had served as a “material contribution” towards protecting American oil concessions in Saudi Arabia by including the principle “that each Government and its nationals shall respect all valid (oil) concessions”.⁴⁹⁶

Before the talks even began, the *New York Times* had reported that the “stated position of the British is that they want, not to compete with the US in obtaining oil concessions in the Middle East but to develop them *pari passu* with those held there by US companies”.⁴⁹⁷ In Washington, the British delegation was able to dispel the lingering rumours that they opposed American plans for a pipeline, especially at a time when they themselves were seeking Lend-Lease aid for their own pipeline project between Kirkuk and Haifa.⁴⁹⁸ London did not feel threatened on the grounds that an American backed pipeline that ran through Saudi Arabia still left “ample room for the operation of British interests in the Middle East,” a point stressed by the *Financial Times* afterwards.⁴⁹⁹ Taking a broader look at the situation in Saudi Arabia, *The Times* of London charted a similar path, claiming that there was “no cause for controversy between Britain and the United States” and praised the “spirit of the Washington discussions and the merging or defining of British and American interests in one of the most important and most controversial of all raw materials...”⁵⁰⁰

These bilateral discussions would serve as a platform for greater cabinet level talks on Middle Eastern oil. In Washington, the Acting Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius and Winston Churchill’s trusted friend, the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Beaverbrook signed the Anglo-American Oil Agreement in August 1944.⁵⁰¹ The intricacies of the agreement were not lost on American officials that had been intimately involved in the negotiations, such as Herbert Feis. In his words, the agreement had been like “walking among the spaces and angles of an abstract

⁴⁹⁶ FRUS 1944. Vol. III, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Hull to Moose, May 11, 1944, pp. 698-699.

⁴⁹⁷ *New York Times*, ‘Deny British Fight US on Arabian Oil’, March 18, 1944.

⁴⁹⁸ See Mejcher, ‘Saudi Arabia’s ‘Vital Link to the West’, pp. 361-362. & Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 157.

⁴⁹⁹ NARA: RG 38/370/14/13/3, Box 5. Winant to State Department, May 5, 1944.

⁵⁰⁰ NARA: RG 38/ 370/ 14/13 /3, Box 5. Winant to State Department, May 5, 1944.

⁵⁰¹ To see a copy of the Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement in full, see Anderson, *Aramco, the United States, Saudi Arabia*, pp. 218-223. For studies that cover the Anglo-American Oil Agreement and viewed it as a positive force to US-British relations in Saudi Arabia, see, Herbert Feis, ‘The Anglo-American Oil Agreement’, *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 5 (August, 1946). For works that stress that the main source of acrimony was between the commercial oil business and governments, not between Britain and the United States, see, Stoff, ‘The Anglo-American Oil Agreement and the Wartime Search for Policy’, *Business History Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Spring, 1981) pp. 59-74. Anderson, *Aramco, the United States*, pp. 86-104. For works that cover the agreement as a representation of Anglo-American rivalry, see Davis, *Contested Space*, pp. 163-168. To a lesser extent, see Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 103- 106. Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*, pp. 188-189.

painting”. Yet, the intersection of British and American interests in Saudi Arabia, according to Feis, had prompted a determined Anglo-American “attempt to establish an international standard of rights and obligations, an international scheme of order in oil”.⁵⁰² This is why the State Department had originally intended the Anglo-American Oil Agreement to be an executive agreement rather than a treaty that had to go through a more difficult process of being ratified by United States Senate. Ultimately, the agreement died on the Senate floor, but not because it was too closely aligned to the British, but because once again, those senators who came from oil states complained that its existence was “unfair to the American oil industry”.⁵⁰³

Nonetheless, writing after the agreement had been signed, Paul F. McGuire, an American official working for the Office of International Economic Affairs, noted that the controversies that had surrounded the PRC in 1943 and 1944, “convince[d] the King that he [could not] depend upon either ARAMCO or the US Gov. to protect his interests in the international petroleum poker game”.⁵⁰⁴ Anything that can be interpreted as “having any kinship with the ill-fated pipeline deal,” opined McGuire, “was very likely to destroy the opportunity for friendly unsuspecting discussion between nations, and create an unfavourable atmosphere of acrimonious debate in Congress and amongst our own business interests and the general public”.⁵⁰⁵ To help repair the United States’ damaged credibility, McGuire saw the accumulated gain of the Anglo-American Oil Agreement. He accurately pinpointed the similarity of British and American oil objectives while juxtaposing them with the interdependent security interests of both nations:

*“I believe those who talk in terms of a battle for strategic military oil reserves between the US and Great Britain misinterpret the true nature of the struggle over oil. From a military standpoint, I feel that British and American holdings form a joint strategic reserve, since I do not foresee that any war in the predictable future will find Britain and the US on opposite sides. If the British covet control over Arabian oil, it is for strictly commercial reasons, which apply as well to the American producers who do not share in the Arabian concession”.*⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰² Herbert Feis, ‘The Anglo-American Oil Agreement’, p. 1182 & p. 1187.

⁵⁰³ See, Anderson, *Aramco, the United States, Saudi Arabia*. p. 106.

⁵⁰⁴ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. ‘Some Observations on the Saudi Arabian Problem’, November 3, 1944. By the autumn of 1944, CASOC had officially changed its name to ARAMCO, the Arabian American Oil Company.

⁵⁰⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. ‘Some Observations on the Saudi Arabian Problem’, November 3, 1944.

⁵⁰⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. ‘Some Observations on the Saudi Arabian Problem’, November 3, 1944.

In other words, British attitudes were not chauvinistic or anti-American, but rather reflected the capitalist nature of the world oil market; an open market in which the concerns of the British Government sometimes overlapped the interests of the independent American oil producers. In this way, the oil question belies those assertions that Saudi Arabia only existed as another area of “contested space” between Britain and the United States. Certainly, some scholars like Wm. Roger Louis have noted that in facing up to the oil issue, the Anglo-American Oil Agreement in effect removed “an irritant between the two governments”.⁵⁰⁷ Likewise, Aaron David Miller has similarly observed that although being “intentionally vague”, the accord “seemed to contain something for everyone”.⁵⁰⁸ The fact is that Saudi Arabian oil would always cause a modicum of contention throughout the rest of the Second World War, and although the points made by Louis and Miller are correct, they undersell the lengths to which British and American officials went to secure an accommodation.

Saudi Arabian Financial Reform

In terms of sparking Anglo-American tensions, there was an issue that outmatched the high drama of oil politics, and it came from an unexpected source; the question of how to deal with the Saudi Arabian Government’s systematic mishandling of its finances. With the new availability of Lend-Lease aid to Saudi Arabia from early 1943, it was clear that the United States would play a greater role in the economic sphere of the Kingdom than it had in 1941 and 1942. While promoting the strategic aspects and oil components of Lend-Lease, the State Department had stressed that the policy would also strengthen Saudi Arabia’s sovereignty by helping Ibn Saud to offset the perception that he was a subaltern of British influence. Recent examples of Britain using the pretext of wartime exigency to lord over Middle East territories, an April 1943 State Department report concluded, were “an all too obvious warning to Ibn Saud” of what would happen if the King leaned too heavily towards the British.⁵⁰⁹ Over the next two years

⁵⁰⁷ Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*, p. 189.

⁵⁰⁸ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 104.

⁵⁰⁹ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. ‘General Considerations in Connection with Economic of Financial Assistance to SA’, April 3, 1943.

the Kingdom would receive from the United States approximately \$18 million dollars of Lend-Lease aid.⁵¹⁰

After strongly advocating that Washington should grant Lend-Lease to Saudi Arabia in 1941, Britain was - now that it was actually happening - “suspicious” of American motives, according to Simon Davis.⁵¹¹ Although it is true that the Foreign Office’s immediate reaction had been that His Majesty’s Government should be the “channel through which American influence is expressed in the Middle East,” this early lack of support for Lend-Lease entering Saudi Arabia had been largely based on the British fear that it would be saddled with the final bill. As Harry Eyres, who worked on Saudi Arabia in the Near East Department, insightfully noted: “our point against it is that Middle Eastern Countries are supposed to pay for Lease Lend material in the later end, and this Ibn Saud will presumably never be in a position to do except on our expense”.⁵¹² Ultimately, however, Lend Lease aid for Saudi Arabia aligned favourably with Britain’s Middle East policy.⁵¹³ London knew that long-term, the initiative fitted within the dual British aims of procuring greater American regional assistance and assaying the Kingdom’s precarious economic position. Furthermore, on a logistical level, the British Government would play a fundamental role in shaping the implementation of Lend-Lease aid as the United States still lacked the governmental agency to see through such a wide ranging policy.⁵¹⁴

Regardless of Lend-Lease’s arrival in Saudi Arabia, Britain and the United States understood that the Saudi Arabian government’s lack of financial oversight left the country in a continuous state of financial chaos. Saudi Arabia’s currency, the Saudi Riyal, was not a paper currency, but was solely based on coins. The coins that the Saudi Government had minted were made of precious metals. This gave the coinage a high bullion value and made it susceptible to hoarding.⁵¹⁵ Adding to the instability, the gold sovereign, not the Riyal, was the preferred currency of choice for the Saudi Government. From October 1942 to February 1943, 95,000 gold sovereigns that were believed to have been part of the British subsidy package for Saudi Arabia had been seized in Iraq.⁵¹⁶ If gold sovereigns and silver riyals were to be offered to Saudi Arabia

⁵¹⁰ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 70 & p. 245.

⁵¹¹ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 108.

⁵¹² PRO: FO 371/31/462 # E6711/6711/25. ‘Lend Lease’ Report, November 20, 1942.

⁵¹³ PRO: FO/371/ 34955. Foreign Office Minute, Feb 18, 1943.

⁵¹⁴ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 70.

⁵¹⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Moose to State Department, August 17, 1943.

⁵¹⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Shullaw to State Department, February 15, 1943.

in the future, both the American and British Governments shared a common interest in Riyadh providing better financial safeguards.

Although Anglo-American discussions on ways to institute reforms began in April 1943, efforts did not gain steam until the British Treasury official, Sir Francis Rugman, was sent to Jeddah that summer. Rugman relayed to London that a paper currency needed to be introduced in Saudi Arabia, along with a currency board that would help the Saudi Arabian Government manage its finances. Even before the Briton's visit, American officials had concurred with Rugman's analysis. "By putting into circulation a currency having no commodity value," a State Department report noted that, "... the exportation of the local currency will no longer be profitable".⁵¹⁷ Yet, before Washington could send their own expert, Treasury official John Guenther, to inspect the Kingdom's financial situation, Stanley Jordan on his way to present his diplomatic credentials had bypassed the American legation and introduced Ibn Saud to a proposal for a British-backed currency board. Hearing of Jordan's actions, American authorities from the State Department and the American Treasury Department in Washington met with their British counterparts to stress the importance of close Anglo-American cooperation:

*"To avoid any appearance of conflict between British and American aims, it was imperative that British officials in Washington realized that the United States, desired and expected, to work jointly with the British on any plan for establishing a permanent currency system in SA".*⁵¹⁸

Soon thereafter in October 1943, Stanley Jordan and James Moose jointly informed Ibn Saud of the need to replace Riyal coins with paper currency. The King rejected the proposition as he considered it to be a violation of Islamic orthodoxy, and the issue was not resolved until after the war's conclusion.⁵¹⁹ The currency board issue, however, was a different matter as it carried certain intangibles that put a spotlight on the notion of hegemony. One month later, American officials had come to the concrete decision that because United States' oil interests were going to be a significant part of the Kingdom's financial future, the Riyal should not be tied solely to the Sterling bloc, but should also be linked to the dollar, silver and gold. This would mean that any

⁵¹⁷ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Shullaw to State Department, April 24, 1943.

⁵¹⁸ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum of Conversation, DH Robertson, W.G. Hayter, Leonard Parker & F.W. McGuire, September 17, 1943.

⁵¹⁹ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum of Conversation, Treasury Department, Leonard Parker & F.W. McGuire, November 24, 1943.

foreign exchange assets that the Kingdom might acquire would be “held or disposed of by its own currency board in accordance with the best interests of the Saudi Arabian people”. In this idealistic vein, the Treasury Department suggested that the proposed currency board should have a strong Saudi-component, with a membership in Jeddah consisting of one American, one Briton and rounded out by three Saudi Arabian representatives.⁵²⁰

Accepting the United States special position, the British Government agreed to the new American proposals *per se*, but hesitated to implement it. Given that Riyadh had little desire to truly reform its profligate ways, if Saudi Arabian authorities gained control of the “modern potentialities of the printing press,” British officials believed that they would bring the “whole new banking and currency system to ruin”.⁵²¹ To the American Henry Dexter White, assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury, such views perfectly exposed Britain’s retrograde outlook. According to White:

*“...when a sovereign nation approaches the US treasury with a request for advice, it is the Treasury’s policy, as stated by the Secretary himself, to give the best advice possible as to what will be in that nation’s own best interest. We do not withhold knowledge on the theory that it is dangerous to teach backward nations modern methods”.*⁵²²

Still, as critical as White was towards Britain, it merits attention that he still advised that the United States should give credence to the long term experience of Britain when it came to handling Saudi Arabia’s financial questions.⁵²³

The Question of Anglo-American Subsidies

At the end of the Second World War, C.W. Baxter, head of the Near East Department at the Foreign Office, looked back to explain the purpose of Anglo-American subsidies. They were implemented to “provide the help which his (Ibn Saud’s) country so urgently needed in the

⁵²⁰ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum of Conversation, Treasury Department, Leonard Parker & F.W. McGuire, November 24, 1943.

⁵²¹ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum of Conversation, British Treasury, US Treasury and State Department, February 17, 1944.

⁵²² NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum of Conversation, British Treasury, US Treasury and State Department, February 17, 1944.

⁵²³ For a contemporary account of Harry Dexter White and his background as a Soviet spy, see *Time Magazine*, ‘The Strange Case of Harry Dexter White’, November 23, 1953.

critical war years”.⁵²⁴ Between 1940 and 1943, the grand total of the British subsidies to Saudi Arabia had been a robust total of 8.3 million pounds.⁵²⁵ From the beginning of 1943 through January of 1944, the subsidy included supplies and food stuffs estimated at a value of 3 million pounds.⁵²⁶ However, as the aggregate sum kept rising as the Axis threat against Saudi Arabia was receding, the increase in the British subsidy no longer computed.⁵²⁷

Foremost, the Hajj - the Kingdom’s greatest source of income - had by 1943 rebounded to almost two-thirds of its pre-war levels and was predicted to further improve in 1944.⁵²⁸ Moreover, the poor finances of the country had little to do with wartime conditions and the smaller Hajj, but rather, was the result of the Saudi Arabian government having “monopolized trade and taken it out of the hands of the merchants”. This left the bulk of Saudi riyals out of circulation and in the hands of hoarders.”⁵²⁹ In addition, the accumulated deficit of the Saudi Arabian Government reached six million pounds in 1944, surpassing the country’s entire gross domestic product since 1939. During the early years of the war, strategic exigencies had forged a policy that had been necessary and shrewd, but now increasingly it appeared that this policy was no longer viable.

In a missive entitled *Memorandum on Extravagance of S.A. Gov.*, the British minister, Stanley Jordan gave a rundown of what he perceived to be the negative consequences of the subsidy. “Bribery and corruption are everywhere”, noted Jordan, which according to him were creating a “new class of paupers” that had formerly not had to rely on the Saudi Arabian government for charity. When Saudi Arabian officials complained of the dire economic situation in the areas around Riyadh, Jordan was left unmoved because he believed that the subsidy was being siphoned away by Saudi officials.⁵³⁰ As the British political agent in Jeddah from 1925-1927, he observed that “the only improvement which I have seen in Arabia since I was here

⁵²⁴ PRO: FO 954/15D, Microfilm, Row #3, Drawer 10. Baxter to Hankey, November 2, 1945.

⁵²⁵ PRO: FO/921/192, Cairo to Foreign Office, copies sent to Stanley Jordan, Chancellor Exchequer, Leo Amery, Colonel Stanley, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, Lord Leathers. September 29, 1944. In 1944, the British Government also offered a £10,000 a month credit to cover the expenses of Saudi Arabia’s Diplomatic Consulates abroad. See, FRUS. 1944, Vol. V, British Embassy to State Department, July 7, 1944, p. 719.

⁵²⁶ PRO: FO/371/40267 E 364/325/25. Foreign Office Minute, January 20, 1944. Also see, FO 371/4028, E 2128/325/25. Foreign Office to Washington April 17, 1944.

⁵²⁷ PRO: FO 954/15D Microfilm, Row 3, Drawer 10. Eden to Churchill, March 31, 1945 & FO 921/192. Lord Moyne, September 18, 1944.

⁵²⁸ PRO: FO 371/40267. Jordan to Baxter. December 31, 1943.

⁵²⁹ PRO: FO 371/4028 E/565/325/25. February 14, 1944.

⁵³⁰ Sheik Yassin had complained to Jordan that the people in the area were so poor, “both women and men, walk about naked.” See, PRO: FO 371/40267, ‘Translation of Meeting between Stanley Jordan and Sheik Yassin’, Jordan to Eden, February 14, 1944.

sixteen years ago is to be found in the making of palaces”.⁵³¹ How much could Britain or the United States rely on if Ibn Saud’s influence in the region if the Kingdom’s traditional ways were being systematically broken down? The King had spoken to Jordan about the parasitic nature of the subsidies and was concerned, but in the end he claimed “our religion and character safeguard us against the evils and dirt” associated with largesse.⁵³² Nevertheless, by New Years Eve of 1943, Jordan in a revealing message sent to the Foreign Office, once again highlighted the undermining effect that the subsidies had on the Saudi Arabian Government: “I fear that it is a case of easy come and easy go”.⁵³³

While Jordan’s line of reasoning offers a window into British thinking, from the American point of view, the subsidy issue was understood in two distinct ways. On one level, if the American subsidy remained the same, the disproportionate amount of political influence that London held in the circles of power in Saudi Arabia would continue. Writing to his State Department colleagues back in January 1943, Alexander Kirk noted:

*“I feel impelled to state that after watching the operation of the system by which American assistance to Saudi Arabia has been channelized through the British, I have gained the impression that we have thereby lost considerable prestige in the eyes of Saudi Arabia who have been given increasingly to feel that the British were their only friends in need”.*⁵³⁴

The subsidies, according to Kirk, were in many respects a question of hegemony in that they symbolized authority. Kirk did not advocate a new American unilateral approach, but did support policies that presented Anglo-American efforts in Saudi Arabia as an equal and mutually responsible enterprise. If not, American interests may be left out in the cold as there was a “discernible tendency toward British economic entrenchment in this area”, Kirk warned, which “might materially negate the best intentioned post-war agreements for equality of opportunity”.⁵³⁵ Over the next two years, American aid to Saudi Arabia would total approximately \$18 million dollars.⁵³⁶

⁵³¹ PRO: FO 371 40267 25/32/487/1233. Jordan to Baxter, December 31, 1943.

⁵³² PRO: FO 816 168 5/792/44. FO Missive, April 18, 1944.

⁵³³ PRO: FO 371 40267 25/32/487/1233. Jordan to Baxter, December 31, 1943.

⁵³⁴ NARA: Microfilm, Reel 6. Kirk to State, January 18, 1943.

⁵³⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Kirk to State, January 18, 1943.

⁵³⁶ Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 245.

On the ground in Jeddah, unlike Stanley Jordan, the American minister James Moose felt strongly that removing the subsidies would have an even more adverse effect on the long-term rule of Ibn Saud. It could not be denied that the financial hardships endured by the Saudis were real. Compounding the problem was not only the austerity engendered by the war, but also the drought that was occurring in the region during this time, one of the worst droughts in living memory. At this time, the Nejd, the ancestral home to the ruling Saud family, faced a ten-to-fifteen-fold increase in inflation, while three quarters of Saudi Arabia's entire livestock succumbed to the drought.⁵³⁷ Moose, for instance, described the condition of Saudi Arabia as the "progressive desiccation of Arabia".⁵³⁸ Regardless of some of the more overt examples of malfeasance pointed out by the British minister; Moose believed that the ongoing episodes of Saudi corruption could be managed eventually. Bearing in mind all of these factors, in February 1944, Moose stood in the way of Jordan's own assertion and recommended to Washington that the subsidy earmarked for Saudi Arabia should be increased for the upcoming year.⁵³⁹

With London being keen on scaling back the subsidy, the State Department in the spring of 1944, seeking a compromise, offered to share it.⁵⁴⁰ In the case of Saudi Arabia, in one way, the proposition certainly was meant to diffuse any question of Anglo-American rivalry that the subsidy question had fomented in Saudi Arabia over the previous half year. But with closer analysis, there were other reasons besides building inter-allied solidarity. In many respects, Washington's push for splitting the subsidy stemmed from their own fear that by continually following Britain's lead, American prestige was reduced in the eyes of Saudi Arabian officials. Entering the year 1944, direct American aid to Saudi Arabia, including Lend-Lease assistance, only amounted to one-sixth of the British total.⁵⁴¹

Still concerned about the nature of Stanley Jordan's influence over Ibn Saud, Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, warned President Roosevelt that the significant difference in the amount of the subsidies needed to come to an end. Sharing the subsidy equally with Britain for the rest of 1944, Hull believed, would "obviate" the dangers arising from allowing Ibn Saud to rely too heavily on the British Government.⁵⁴² From the Foreign Office's perspective, the talk of a 50-50

⁵³⁷ FO 371/ 31462. Lord Killearn to Ministry of War Transport, November 18, 1942.

⁵³⁸ FRUS 1944. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth and Europe*, Moose to Hull, April 29, 1944, p. 694.

⁵³⁹ FO 371/ 40267. Jordan to Eden, February 14, 1944.

⁵⁴⁰ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Stettinius to Hull, April 22, 1944, p. 690.

⁵⁴¹ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Hull to Roosevelt, April 3, 1944, p. 679.

⁵⁴² FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Hull to Roosevelt, April 3, 1944, p. 679.

arrangement appeared to be suspiciously ambiguous in its form. By pointedly omitting a cap on future expenditure, American subsidies could continue to increase, thus leaving British influence in Saudi Arabia looking parsimonious and weak. Foreign Office minutes suggest that James Moose had tried to persuade Ibn Saud to request a larger subsidy from the British Government, knowing full well that London would be unwilling to meet the ample American contributions.⁵⁴³

Before a 50-50 Anglo-American subsidy could be agreed upon, on April 12, 1944, the United States Government planned to increase its aid to Saudi Arabia. Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, extended 3,437,500 ounces of silver for the minting of Saudi Riyals.⁵⁴⁴ This was met with dismay by the Foreign Office as they believed it would aggravate the currency question further and they asked that the minting be postponed until an official Anglo-American subsidy agreement had been reached.⁵⁴⁵ Morgenthau's minting was put on hold but it was a sneak preview to Saudi Arabian officials that the United States had the potential to outstrip Britain's offerings of financial aid. Hence, it was not a question of "if", but "when" Britain would be unable to participate on an equal financial footing with the United States.

Although looking to scale back its financial commitment to Saudi Arabia, London was not ready to relinquish its influence entirely. After being notified of Ibn Saud's request for a financial advisor that spring, Cordell Hull had proclaimed that because of the "United States' preponderant interest in the Saudi Arabian economy", the position should be filled by an American.⁵⁴⁶ On hearing this, the Undersecretary of State for the Foreign Office, Sir Maurice Peterson, remarked that the glare from their allies' oil holdings in the Kingdom had blinded their judgment. On their way to the Holy Cities, pilgrims from British territories and Sterling area countries, Peterson snapped, had accounted for over 40 million riyals entering the country, a percentage that dwarfed American contributions to Saudi Arabia's revenue.⁵⁴⁷ In Washington, the British Embassy, according to a Foreign Office report at the time, "debunked in no uncertain terms" American claims of economic supremacy in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴³ PRO: FO 921/192. Foreign Office to Jeddah, September 29, 1944.

⁵⁴⁴ FRUS. Vol. V, Hull to Moose, March 3, 1944, p. 677. During the period of 1943-1945, the United States gave 22.3 million ounces of silver to Saudi Arabia. Cited in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury for Fiscal Year Ended, June 30, 1944*, R. Mikesell, *Arabian Oil* (United States, 1949) pp. 77-78.

⁵⁴⁵ PRO: FO 371/4028. Foreign Office to Washington, April 17, 1944.

⁵⁴⁶ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East* Hull to Peterson, July, 1, 1944, pp. 718-719.

⁵⁴⁷ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East* Peterson to Hull, July 7, 1944, pp. 711-713. 1944, V. During the Second World War, 1 Riyal roughly = \$.30, Mikesell, *Arabian Oil*, p.78.

⁵⁴⁸ PRO: FO 371/ 45542. Foreign Office Minute, March 6, 1945.

Before these economic questions could boil over, however, in the summer of 1944, both sides eventually came to an agreement that would at least temporarily lead to an important compromise over the question of splitting the subsidy for Saudi Arabia. On July 7, 1944, the Anglo-American joint-subsidy programme for Saudi Arabia was enacted, and it was agreed that the British Government would proffer supplies and goods totalling 2,754,000 pounds, including 10,000 pounds per month allocated for Saudi Arabia's worldwide diplomatic missions. The United States would continue to subsidize Saudi Arabia through Lend-Lease and would mint 10,000,000 Silver Riyals worth roughly the total of the British subsidy and Lend-Lease goods totalling 292,000 pounds.⁵⁴⁹

Revitalizing the Wartime Alliance

So what were the factors that had ostensibly led Britain and the United States to put aside some of their major differences when it came to Saudi Arabian oil and the Kingdom's economic issues? In retrospect, the prevailing political winds of the wartime alliance in the spring of 1944 had called for the imperative of Anglo-American cooperation. At a time when the American official Harley Notter of the Division of Special Research had come up with blueprints for a permanent Anglo-American military alliance, leading up to this period, a set of high profile disputes had in fact alienated the two allies.⁵⁵⁰ Most conspicuously, the events of the Tehran Conference (November 28-December 1, 1943) had openly wiped the sheen off the perceived intimacy of Roosevelt and Churchill and heightened tensions in the Anglo-American relationship vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.⁵⁵¹ Debates over wartime strategy at this time had also given rise to a divergence in views. The United States' wartime objectives had shifted increasingly towards the Pacific, while Britain, thinking of ways to maximize its imperial power, continued to give special priority to the Mediterranean theatre.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ FRUS 1944. Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth and Europe* 'The Stettinius Report', May 22, 1944, p. 29. & FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East Aide-Memoire*, British Embassy to the Department of State, July 7, 1944, pp. 713-715.

⁵⁵⁰ NARA: Harley Notter Files. RG 59, Stack Area 250 Row 6, Compartment 22, Shelf 06, Box 166-169, Entry 298, Files 457. 'Anglo-American Relations: Post War Alternatives', February 17, 1944.

⁵⁵¹ See, K. Eubank, *Summit at Tehran* (New York: William & Morrow, 1985).

⁵⁵² NARA: RG 218-190-1-74 Box 316, Entry UD1. 'Current British Policy and Strategies Rel. to that of the US', May 8, 1943.

To rejuvenate the wartime alliance, especially in the context of the imminent Allied invasion of Western Europe, in April 1944, an American delegation led by Edward Stettinius, met British counterparts in London to try to alleviate the developing friction.⁵⁵³ Historically, this trip has since been referred to as the Stettinius Mission. Stettinius, characterized by *The Times* as a “man of efficiency and imagination” on his arrival to London, said that the objective of his mission was to create a framework which would allow disagreements between the United States and Britain to be “raised frankly, jointly examined and disposed of as soon as they arise”.⁵⁵⁴ Backing Stettinius, the British Permanent Undersecretary of State of Foreign Affairs, Sir Maurice Peterson, remarked that the talks held the “laudable object” of overcoming differences, which “threatened to obstruct the conduct of the war and to prejudice harmony when it came to the making of peace”.⁵⁵⁵ At the conclusion of the Stettinius mission, Edward Stettinius had sent Winston Churchill the message that “we may look forward to a bright future of permanent harmonious and beneficial Anglo-American relations”.⁵⁵⁶

While having discussed such high profile issues as their policies towards the Axis powers, the Soviet Union, and post-war world organizations, during the Stettinius Mission British and American officials also found time to press for further Anglo-American integration in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁵⁷ While pledging to combine their aid packages to Saudi Arabia in the months ahead, Britain and the United States also made a preliminary vow to establish a joint Anglo-American military mission to assist Ibn Saud in training a “modern Saudi Arabian Army,” a subject that will be discussed further in the following chapter.⁵⁵⁸

Lord Halifax, who was at times especially critical of the Americans with regards to their conduct in Saudi Arabia, wrote after the Stettinius Mission of the two countries common interests. Halifax noted: “There is nothing really predator or sinister in American intentions toward us (*sic*)...”⁵⁵⁹ His colleague back in London C.W. Baxter put it even more

⁵⁵³ Warren Kimball, *Forged in War*, pg. 261.

⁵⁵⁴ *The Times*, April 8, 1944, p. 4. & FRUS. Vol. II, ‘Stettinius Report’, May 22, 1944, p. 29. * The scholar Thomas M. Campbell sees the Stettinius Mission as evidence of British and American policymakers realizing that Anglo-American cooperation were an “essential cornerstone for a stable postwar world.” Thomas Campbell, (ed.) *Stettinius Diaries 1943- 1946* (United States, 1975) p. 36.

⁵⁵⁵ M. Peterson, *Both Sides of the Curtain* (London, 1950) p. 238.

⁵⁵⁶ PRO: PREM 4/18/3. Stettinius to Churchill, April 28, 1944.

⁵⁵⁷ See Randall Woods. *Changing of the Guard: Anglo-American Relations 1941-1946* (United States: University of North Carolina Press, 1990) pp. 154-157.

⁵⁵⁸ FRUS. Vol. III, Stettinius to Hull, May 22, 1944, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁵⁹ PRO: FO 921/191, E2720/2720/G. Halifax to Foreign Office, May 3, 1944.

straightforwardly: “to some degree Anglo-American cooperation in Jedda has become a test of the possibility of Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East as a whole”.⁵⁶⁰ Taking into account this far-reaching consideration, Wm. Roger Louis holds that Saudi Arabia at this point was not judged by British officials to be an area of inter-allied rivalry, but as an “anchor” for greater American involvement in the Middle East that would benefit the security of Britain’s own regional interests.⁵⁶¹

Baxter’s opposite number, Wallace Murray, who had been a member of Stettinius’ entourage and led discussions on all Anglo-American Middle East issues, felt that the two powers were now on the same page in the Kingdom. For Murray, it was clear “that British political and strategic interests and paramount United States oil interests in Saudi Arabia...should not conflict”.⁵⁶² For the United States to assert its power globally, a close working relationship with British officials had to be closely maintained. “We do not wish to compete with the British in Saudi Arabia but to cooperate with them,” said Landis, as he felt it was unproductive to “compete with the British on an all-out basis in that area”.⁵⁶³ In this respect, the global role of the United States - in what the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Edgar Mowrer described as the “world madhouse” - was fragmentary and was not clearly formulated in the summer of 1944, specifically in a country like Saudi Arabia where the United States government lacked diplomatic experience.⁵⁶⁴

Fixing the “Lack of Liaison” in Saudi Arabia

The relationship between ministers in Jeddah is a facet of the Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia that warrants more attention than has previously been given to it.⁵⁶⁵ Given Saudi Arabia’s geography, far removed from the corridors of power in London and Washington, the diplomatic representatives on the ground consistently figured highly in shaping

⁵⁶⁰ PRO: 921/19125(4)144/36. Foreign Office to Minister Resident in Cairo & Jeddah, May 7, 1944.

⁵⁶¹ Wm. Roger Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*, p. 173.

⁵⁶² FRUS. 1944 Vol. III, *The British Commonwealth and Europe* ‘The Stettinius Report’, May 22, 1944, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁶³ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Landis to Murray, June 9, 1944.

⁵⁶⁴ Edgar Mowrer, *The Nightmare of American Foreign Policy* (London, 1949) p 199.

⁵⁶⁵ While the key texts do put a spotlight on the major personalities of the subject, none adequately examine the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and how they were a crucial force shaping Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. For a look at the role of personalities, see Matthew Hinds, ‘Ministers Abroad: British and American Ministers in Saudi Arabia, Spring 1944’. This paper was presented at the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) Conference in Washington DC in 2007.

and implementing their nations' policies in the Kingdom. In a missive sent to the Foreign Office in the afterglow of the Stettinius Mission, Lord Halifax discussed the role of personnel in trying to ascertain the reasons for the faltering cooperation between British and American officials in Saudi Arabia. Halifax explained:

*"State Department tells me, have lately been receiving a number of reports from their representative at Jedda criticizing our alleged lack of co-operation with the Americans in S.A. and even implying that on occasion our people there have been working against the Americans. Some of these reports have found their way to Capitol, Post (Washington Post), etc. and Hull (Secretary of State) is getting upset by them".*⁵⁶⁶

In answering Halifax's comments, C.W. Baxter acknowledged problems with the Anglo-American alliance on the ground in Saudi Arabia, and he suggested that to avoid such situations as the Sahla affair, inter-allied communication on the "spot" in Jeddah needed to be improved:

*"Our people in Saudi Arabia have not been working against the Americans...many elements in the Middle East are anxious to take advantage of any lack of liaison on the spot and we share with the State Department the hope that if closer co-operation can be established this most undesirable state of affairs will come to an end".*⁵⁶⁷

Reflecting on this, Halifax came up with a plan to fix the latest glitch in Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, seeing it as a personnel problem rather than a symptom of hegemonic rivalry. He suggested to Wallace Murray that they should look to Egypt. "If their (American) representatives at Jedda were on terms of close confidence with our representative as Kirk (Alexander Kirk) has been with Lord Killearn (Sir Miles Lampson) in Cairo, said Halifax, these difficulties (in Saudi Arabia) would not arise".⁵⁶⁸

Afterwards, Lord Halifax in Washington and C.W. Baxter in London summarily concluded that Stanley Jordan must "establish relations of friendship and confidence with Mr. Moose" and "discuss all supply and financial questions with him [James Moose] on a joint basis,

⁵⁶⁶ PRO: FO 921/191, E2720/2720/G. Halifax to Foreign Office, May 3, 1944.

⁵⁶⁷ PRO: FO 921/191, E2720/2720/G. Foreign Office to Halifax, May 7, 1944.

⁵⁶⁸ PRO: FO 921/191, E2720/2720/G. Halifax to Foreign Office, May 3, 1944. For more information on the Killearn-Kirk relationship see, FO 954/5C, Microfilm, April 27, 1944. LSE pamphlet collection: CT/B78, T. E. Evans 'Mission to Egypt- 1934-1946 Lord Killearn', Inaugural Lecture at Aberystwyth, December 2, 1970.

securing agreement with his recommendations wherever possible”.⁵⁶⁹ Proposals were additionally put forth for Jordan’s entire staff to work more closely with their American counterparts. Identical instructions, *mutatis mutandis*, would later be explicitly sent to Moose by the Near East Department.⁵⁷⁰

Even after both ministers received these instructions, the Secretary of State Cordell Hull complained to Halifax that Stanley Jordan was still “doing his level best to injure the American Government’s relations with the King and, in other ways, endeavouring to undermine the American situation, and that we just could not put up with this without constant and louder complaint”.⁵⁷¹ That spring, the Foreign Office had already warned Stanley Jordan of his conduct, explaining to him that he had not kept Moose “adequately informed on matters of supply and finance” and that “Washington are equally worried at lack of close liaison between you and Mr. Moose”.⁵⁷²

Back in March 1944, unbeknownst to American officials, Stanley Jordan had intercepted a memorandum written by the Saudi Arabian Minister of Mines and Supply, Nagib Sahla, in which he tried to convince the Minister of Finance, Abdullah Suleimann that Ibn Saud should cease his traditional association with Britain and build more formative ties with the United States.⁵⁷³ Sahla extolled in his memo: “the Americans are wholeheartedly with us and wish to help but will not do it on their own accord. They want us to ask them so that they will have a say in the matter”.⁵⁷⁴ At least one of the “Americans” of whom Sahla believed he had the support of was the American representative of the Middle East Supply Centre, Judge James Landis. Based in Cairo, Landis principally oversaw American economic and supply issues in Saudi Arabia in early 1944. Landis was told by Sahla in secret that Jordan’s estimates of Saudi Arabia’s current financial position did not include the debts that were owed to the British Government. Landis, he

⁵⁶⁹ PRO: FO 921/191, 2720/2720/G. Foreign Office to Halifax, May 7, 1944.

⁵⁷⁰ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Hull to Moose, July 12, 1944, pp. 716-717.

⁵⁷¹ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Hull Memorandum, June 26, 1944, p. 710.

⁵⁷² FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Moose to Hull, March 13, 1944, p. 676.

⁵⁷³ PRO: FO 921/191. Foreign Office Minute, March 3, 1944.

⁵⁷⁴ PRO: FO 921/191. Foreign Office Minute, March 3, 1944.

was “amazed” by this information as Jordan had mentioned none of this to him when they met the previous month in Cairo.⁵⁷⁵

In defense of Jordan’s actions, the reason why he had chosen not to inform his American colleagues about the Sahla connection in the first place was that he wanted to protect the identity of another Saudi Arabian official, Hafiz Wahba, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Britain, who had alerted British officials about his compatriot’s behind-the-scenes chicanery.⁵⁷⁶ After the incident, Richard Law, Minister of State and Churchill’s Private Parliamentary Secretary, wrote to Lord Moyne: “we shall not confront (the Americans) with documents which support the ideal of American encouragement of Nagib Sahla, but we can say that the latter has clearly been trying to play them off against us and point out the obvious moral”.⁵⁷⁷ To further his case that the United States was uninterested in working in partnership with Britain, Barry Rubin had explained that unlike their British colleagues, American officials did not realize the “provocative role of the Saudis themselves”.⁵⁷⁸ Rubin’s claim, however, is exaggerated as during this same time none other than Henry Stimson wrote personally to Cordell to warn him of “the willingness of King Ibn Saud to play each nation (the United States and Britain) against the other as a means of obtaining the assistance he desires”.⁵⁷⁹

The situation grew more complicated on March 30, 1944, when a new memorandum to be held in the “strictest confidence” was sent by James Moose to American officials at the State Department regarding the conduct of Stanley Jordan. An insider within the Saudi Arabian Government told Moose that the British minister had also orchestrated the removal of Najib Bey Salim, an official believed to be friendly to the United States. Bey Salim was to be succeeded by Izzedi Neshawar, who Jordan claimed, “is now playing ball with us [the British Government]”. What proved to be so incendiary about the accusation was that the Saudi Arabian official had told Moose that Jordan had gone rogue, making up his own independent policy without the consent of the Foreign Office.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁵ PRO: FO 921/191. Moyne to Eden, March 18, 1944. Landis’ full title was Director of Economic Operations in the Middle East. See D.A. Ritchie, *James Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (United States: Harvard University Press, 1980) pp.124-125.

⁵⁷⁶ PRO: FO 921/191. Foreign Office to Jordan, May 7, 1944.

⁵⁷⁷ PRO: FO 921/191. Law to Moyne, April 18, 1944.

⁵⁷⁸ B. Rubin, *The Great Powers in the Middle East: 1941-1947*, p. 55.

⁵⁷⁹ NARA: RG 218/190/1/11/6 Box 148. Stimson to Hull, May 1, 1944.

⁵⁸⁰ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Moose to Hull, March 13, 1944, p. 671.

Even if some of his colleagues conceded that at times it was “extraordinarily hard to follow Mr. Jordan’s thoughts”, C.W. Baxter of the Foreign Office backed his man in Jeddah.⁵⁸¹ Because Jordan sought to curtail Anglo-American largesse in the Kingdom, he had fallen out of favour with Saudi Arabian officials and by doing so had “earned the enmity of various influential persons who may well have been tale-bearers to the American minister”.⁵⁸² Despite putting the blame on the manipulation of Saudi Arabian officials, it had become evident that Stanley Jordan would not have the same breezy relationship with his American colleagues that his predecessor, Hugh Stonehewer-Bird enjoyed, with this state of affairs being further underscored by the incidents of March 1944.⁵⁸³

With this in mind, to alleviate the mounting tensions in Jeddah, Edward Stettinius, fresh off his successful mission to London, decided to directly intervene. According to Halifax, Stettinius - backed by a consensus from the NEA at the State Department - stressed that the “good that was achieved by Middle East talks in London should not be undone by continued friction in Jeddah, which might merely be due to personalities”.⁵⁸⁴ Another American official who believed that Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia was being jeopardized because of personnel problems was James Landis, who declared that “the British minister in SA has been working against us, it is essential that there be someone there who will work with us...”⁵⁸⁵ But, at the same time as the Americans heaped scorn on Stanley Jordan, London scrutinized James Moose, wondering if he was up to the task of facilitating Anglo-American cooperation. Despite working well with Stonehewer-Bird, there were some British officials, who harboured a low opinion of Moose and considered him “second rate” and a “lightweight poorly equipped for his job”.⁵⁸⁶ Moose’s position in Jeddah had already been weakened that spring by the arrival of the envoy Colonel William Eddy in April 1944. According to the *Charge d’Affaires* Parker Hart, during the short time of his visit, Eddy had “superimposed” Moose as the chief of the American legation.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸¹ PRO: FO 371/40267, E 1160/325/25. Minute by R.M.A. Hankey, February 24, 1944.

⁵⁸² PRO: FO 921/191. Foreign Office to Halifax, May 7, 1944.

⁵⁸³ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Moose to State Department, March 30, 1944.

⁵⁸⁴ PRO: FO 921/191, E2720/2720/G. Foreign Office to Halifax, May 7, 1944.

⁵⁸⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 6. Landis to Murray, June 9, 1944.

⁵⁸⁶ The various views on Moose were from Gerald Hume Pinsent of the British Treasury and William Croft, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister Resident in Cairo. See, A. D. Miller, *Search for Security*, p. 113

⁵⁸⁷ P. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, p. 23.

In late May 1944, Stettinius had telephoned the Counsellor of the British Embassy in Washington, Sir Ronald Campbell, to inform him that the United States would be replacing Moose with a new representative. Stettinius held that it was the “personal informal feeling” of the State Department that Britain should in turn, reciprocate and replace its minister, thus permitting both countries to “change horses at the same time”.⁵⁸⁸ Stettinius’ proposition indicates that, like Halifax, he emphasized the role of personnel and personality, believing that Anglo-American tensions could be eased by putting in place British and American ministers, who worked well together.

On this score, Washington made the first personnel change that summer as Colonel William Eddy returned to Jeddah and succeeded Moose on September 1, 1944, taking his place as the new American minister to Saudi Arabia.⁵⁸⁹ The British on the other hand proved to be more circumspect about the planned swap. Halifax had cabled the Foreign Office explaining that Stettinius’ original proposal had in fact put them in a bind. “The matter is naturally somewhat delicate since they (the Americans) imply that the fault may be that of their own man and a difficult situation would be created if he (Moose) learned of their appeal to us”.⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, some of Moose’s own American colleagues, including Eddy, had intimated that he lacked the gravitas that came with his ministerial authority.⁵⁹¹ Despite some of the reservations London had concerning Jordan, C.W. Baxter concluded: “We see no reason to change our own representation there; a change which as it appears to us would be not only unjustifiable but highly inconvenient in view of the shortage of Arabic experts”.⁵⁹²

With Jordan for the moment standing pat, that August, there was added controversy when without notifying the British legation, Moose personally informed Saudi Arabian officials that as part of the Anglo-American supply programme, the Governments of the United States and Britain would be furnishing a large shipment of foodstuffs, which included tea, sugar, and cereals. Although the incident seems relatively minor, Jordan was angered by it. Before Moose left Jeddah for good on August 18, 1944, the British minister pointed out to his American counterpart the troubling underlying gist of his actions, especially in light of the decrees espoused from the Stettinius Mission. As far as Jordan could see, “such communication made to

⁵⁸⁸ PRO: FO 921/191. Halifax to Foreign Office, May 21, 1944.

⁵⁸⁹ PRO: FO/921/192. Jordan to Foreign Office, September 6, 1944.

⁵⁹⁰ PRO: FO 921/191. Halifax to Foreign Office, May 2, 1944.

⁵⁹¹ Phone Interview with Clarence Macintosh, January 26, 2006.

⁵⁹² PRO: FO 921/191. Foreign Office, May 28, 1944.

the SA government without HMG's approval destroyed the whole basis of collaboration between United States and UK in regard to Saudi Arabia, which had been built up so industriously over the last few months".⁵⁹³

By the same token, the Foreign Office had their own view of the current state of Anglo-American relations. Once receiving a "prompt" retraction from the Americans over Moose's diplomatic *faux pas*, the Foreign Office sent a revealing missive to Jordan that gives an insight into how British officialdom took a long-term view of their relationship with the United States in the Kingdom. While expressing disappointment "that Mr. Moose *has not* (their emphasis) more fully reciprocated your efforts at collaboration," Jordan was also reminded that in future he was to refrain from being "over suspicious" of US motives. "American impulsiveness and inexperience in dealing with the Arabs may sometimes lead them to act injudiciously", the Foreign Office noted "but we must endeavour to persuade and guide them on the right lines, and be patient with their mistakes".⁵⁹⁴ Ironically, London would eventually lose patience with Stanley Jordan and remove him from Jeddah, after it had become clear that the British minister also had trouble getting on with his new American colleague, William Eddy. This sore subject for Anglo-American relations will be examined more closely in the next chapter.⁵⁹⁵

Conclusion

In the summer of 1944, a report from the American legation in Cairo had claimed that "Saudi Arabia presents the best test case for concrete cooperation with the British in all the Middle East and we should succeed in making it work here".⁵⁹⁶ Even when the oil concessions in Saudi Arabia in 1943 had come to be considered by American officials as a vital national interest - not only to the immediate war effort - but also to the future security of the United States, the Anglo- American relationship in the Kingdom did in fact undergo a change, but it did not diminish. The overwhelming line of thinking coming from Washington and London was that British influence and the development of an American oil concession in Saudi Arabia did not have to be antipathetic, but could be reciprocal. Certainly, in some influential American circles,

⁵⁹³ PRO: CAB 121/639. Jordan to Foreign Office, August 16, 1944.

⁵⁹⁴ PRO: WO 208/1592. Foreign Office to Jeddah, August 16, 1944.

⁵⁹⁵ Jordan would remain unemployed until May 1946 when he was appointed Trade Commissioner to Palestine. See, Godfrey Hertslet (ed.) *Foreign Office List* (London, 1946).

⁵⁹⁶ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *The Near East, South Asia, Africa, the Far East*, Jacobs to Hull, June 3, 1944 p. 700.

there were deeply held suspicions that the British Government was eyeing the oil concession, but this was in fact not a majority view. Likewise, although London had its doubts about the United States Government entering the Kingdom's oil sphere, the loudest complaints emanated largely from American critics, who feared that their government was turning into a commercial oil cartel. If one still sees the subject of Saudi Arabian oil being a cause of inter-allied tension, the efforts to alleviate this cause of friction paradoxically further enjoined the two wartime allies, culminating in the signing of the Anglo-American Oil Agreement in 1944.

The debate over Saudi Arabia's finances proved to be a highly contested and sensitive issue. While both powers acknowledged the need for Riyadh to overhaul its currency, they disagreed on what shape and extent the reforms should take. With regard to the subsidy question, as far as Stanley Jordan was concerned, raising them opened up a Pandora's Box, one that would bring down the fabric of Saudi Arabian society and unravel Ibn Saud's authority and his image as being completely independent in the process. The United States since the beginning of the Second World War shared similar concerns, yet the American minister deviated from his British counterpart's final assessment. Like many American officials at the time, James Moose saw that increased subsidies would stabilize the poor economic situation in the Kingdom and be beneficial to the burgeoning Saudi-American relationship. Although the subsidy question would continue to be a source of friction as the next chapter will show, the two sides did make impressive headway in by agreeing to subsidize Saudi Arabia on an equal level.

What one cannot be overlooked is the fact that the fulcrum of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia laid in the evolving strategic interdependence of the wartime allies. With the D-Day landings approaching, the projection of Anglo-American unity became axiomatic for British and American officials in 1944. Indeed, the Kingdom had been marked out on both sides of the Atlantic as an area where both powers could effectively bind their interests and policies together into a single Anglo-American body. Thus, when trying to account for the examples of discord between the powers, an element that historians have not stressed enough is that London and Washington understood these occasional punch-ups manifesting more from a clash of personalities rather than an actual divergence of interests between the two nations.

Chapter VI

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1944-1945: The Limits and Advantages of Cooperation

Introduction

The ambitious expectations that British and American policymakers had for Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia were still prevalent when the new American minister William Eddy arrived in Jeddah in September 1944. In one sense, the poor communication on the ground that had been a major problem for Washington and London in the spring and summer of 1944 had improved by autumn. But during those months while still committed to close collaboration, it became clear that the wider views held by the two allies on how to engage with the Saudi Arabian Government had reached an impasse. Certainly, British and American policies were at this juncture still constructed to align firmly with the emerging anti-colonial consensus, designed not to infringe upon the Kingdom's sovereignty on which Ibn-Saud's influence as an Arab statesman was seen to hinge. Yet, some American officials like Eddy were worried about being openly associated with what they perceived to be the imperial taint of Britain's influence in Saudi Arabia. Ironically, British officials in Jeddah and the Foreign Office had their own concerns about their American ally. They grumbled that Eddy's push for policies founded on the provision of rapid and excessive aid possessed all the hallmarks of a new form of colonialism; one that would in the process destabilize - not only the Al-Saud regime - but also Britain's Middle East *Imperia*.

The schisms, which were developing within the Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia, were also in part the result of the different national priorities of both countries. The United States Government desired to be on the "ground floor" in Saudi Arabia and was ready to implement ambitious policies in a bid to firmly secure access to the Kingdom's oil supplies.⁵⁹⁷ Although Ibn Saud remained a key to British foreign policy, stretched by an array of imperial concerns around the globe, London was not in a position to match an American policy in Saudi

⁵⁹⁷ PRO: FO 371/ 145542. Minute by R.J. Campbell, March 14, 1944.

Arabia that was increasingly driven by largesse. This was however not to say that Britain was heading down a path towards irrelevancy in the Kingdom. On the contrary, in spite of the growing US presence in Saudi Arabia, the diplomatic influence that British officials had crafted for over a generation remained strong; a point that American officials would on more than one occasion reflect upon as they apprehensively considered the limits of their own national power.

The wartime alliance also encountered two further issues in late 1944 and early 1945 that had hegemonic implications. By its very nature, a project like establishing a joint Anglo-American military mission for Ibn Saud was a conspicuous symbol of power and influence, naturally inclined to prey upon feelings of national rivalry and distrust. The other critical issue, the US's aim of constructing an airfield in Dhahran, was based on bolstering Allied supply routes for the Pacific theatre. However, control of the skies and the subsidiary issues that were linked to it, namely civil aviation and telecommunications, represented new spheres of power that risked fomenting inter-allied competition.

As highlighted in earlier chapters, the relationship between the two powers in Saudi Arabia nonetheless had a remarkable propensity to renew itself against all odds. Although at times the events in the Kingdom bore a resemblance to Simon Davis' description of the period as an "enduring microcosm of Anglo-American antagonism", more often than not, the second half of 1944 entering into 1945 saw the reciprocal properties of strategic interdependence between Britain and the United States develop and grow.⁵⁹⁸ Despite reservations concerning the nature of American policy, British officials believed that their ally's rising ascendancy in the Kingdom could still complement Britain's own position of influence. Conversely, with Saudi Arabia and its oil concerns now considered a fixture in American foreign policy, the pattern of Washington turning to the British to facilitate its own strategic objectives emerges once again. At this time, Britain and the United States were on the path towards recognizing that while their policy objectives and perceptions of Saudi Arabia would not always be the same, their relationship could still be strategically valuable.

⁵⁹⁸ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 173.

William Eddy and Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia

Born and raised in Sidon, modern day Lebanon, the new US Minister to Saudi Arabia, Colonel William Eddy's formative years had endowed him with an intimate knowledge of the Middle East. An accomplished Arabist, he had once taught at the American University in Cairo and was also known as the first person to translate the rules of basketball into Arabic.⁵⁹⁹ Like his cousin Harold Hoskins, he was particularly connected to the powers of the East Coast American establishment through his past growing up in Lebanon as part of the small, yet influential American-Protestant missionary community.⁶⁰⁰ With Eddy's background, it is little wonder that one scholar of American foreign policy in the Middle East has remarked that he was "probably the nearest thing the United States had to a Lawrence of Arabia."⁶⁰¹

Eddy had already travelled to Jeddah in the spring of 1944, and on his arrival, the British legation notified the Foreign Office that Eddy held an unusual amount of influence and political clout, but they could not ascertain the nature of his "work".⁶⁰² Eddy was in fact under the supervision of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), attempting to establish a US intelligence service in Saudi Arabia in order that, like Britain, the United States could use "unorthodox procedures in collecting information".⁶⁰³ Ironically, like Moose, Eddy quickly fell out with Stanley Jordan. The British minister's highhandedness grated on Eddy as he lectured him about, "the natural greed of the Arabs", a greed, he asserted, that had been sharpened by his HMG's generosity and by the more recent participation of the United States in the provision of supplies".⁶⁰⁴ Eddy held Jordan's views in contempt and complained to his colleagues about what he regarded as Jordan's "incipient insanity". Such an overstatement leaves the American sounding a bit unhinged himself.⁶⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the notion that a change in diplomatic

⁵⁹⁹ SML: William Eddy Papers. Box 12, Folder 11, 'Basketball Rule Book', 1930.

⁶⁰⁰ SML: William Eddy Papers. Box 6 Folder 1, July 8, 1945. To give greater context to Eddy's worldview, J. Grabill has remarked that American missionaries in the early 20th century: "*A powerful lobby which wanted the United States Government to organize part of the Old World. Failing to achieve this aim, the religionists nevertheless had a continuing effect in diplomacy...*" See- J. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East-Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927*(Minneapolis, 1971) p. 286.

⁶⁰¹ Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East*, p. 76.

⁶⁰² PRO: FO 921/121. Jeddah to the Eastern Department, Foreign Office, July 13, 1944.

⁶⁰³ NARA: RG 228, OSS Record Archives, Entry 108C, Box 10, Folder 29, Memorandum 'the Possibility of a US Intelligence Service in Saudi Arabia'. April, 4, 1944.

⁶⁰⁴ PRO: FO/921/192. 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia', Jordan to Foreign Office, September 6, 1944.

⁶⁰⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Eddy to Washington, June 30, 1944. On top of his poor impression of Jordan, Eddy had troubling experiences with British officials earlier in the war. During his time as part of the OSS in

personnel in Jeddah would be a means in itself to facilitate greater Anglo-American cooperation did not fully materialize.

September 1, 1944 - the day that Eddy first met with Stanley Jordan as American minister - the *USS John Barry* carrying a shipment of three million newly minted riyals earmarked for the Saudi Arabian government, was sunk off the coast of Aden. The British navy was responsible for the protection of all Allied vessels between the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf, and the American legation in Jeddah was up in arms over what it perceived as British “incompetence”.⁶⁰⁶ With tensions between the two allies already in an aggravated state, Eddy had come to discuss with Jordan American objectives in the Kingdom. He carefully explained that his country had no interest in Iraq, Palestine, the Levant States and Egypt – traditional areas of British influence -but it did have a substantial stake in Saudi Arabia. Eddy announced that the United States had ambitious plans to modernize the Kingdom and would seek to implement “costly projects” – building up infrastructure, promoting education and expanding the earlier work at the US agricultural mission in Al Kharj.⁶⁰⁷ To show his sincerity, the final point that Eddy made to his British colleague was that the United States was “prepared to force legislation through Congress, which would assure a continuity of their benevolent policy towards this country (Saudi Arabia)”.⁶⁰⁸

In conjunction with Eddy’s message on the United States’ objectives in Saudi Arabia, revelations which pointed towards the post-war world, British officialdom took stock of their relations with their wartime ally. A Foreign Office memorandum from September 1944 tried to assess this new sense of American urgency:

Tangiers, the Chief of the British Secret Intelligence allegedly plotted to poison his own assistant for being too close to Eddy; an incident far away from the exemplar of amiability of General Dwight Eisenhower and Harold Macmillan, the British Minister Resident in Algiers during Operation Torch. See, H.R. Smith, *OSS, the Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency*, (London: Lyons Press, 1972) p. 42. & N. Fischer, *Harold Macmillan* (London: Littlehampton Press, 1982) p. 99.

⁶⁰⁶ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350 Row 67 Compartment 22 Shelf 1 Entry 3153 Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945, Box 1. Hart to State Department, September 3, 1944.

⁶⁰⁷ PRO: FO/921/192. Sir William Croft referring to Jordan’s report, Cairo to Foreign Office, September 29, 1944. A former Dean at Hobart College, William Eddy was not the only American official to stress education as a valuable tool to expand American influence in the region. The American minister to Afghanistan, Cornelius Van H. Engert presented the King of Afghanistan with *The Writings of George Washington*, which he hoped would be distributed at the Afghan Academy School. See Lauinger Library (LL): Cornelius Van H. Engert Papers, Box 9, Folder 9. ‘The Writings of George Washington’, Van H. Engert to Hull, December 3, 1944.

⁶⁰⁸ PRO: FO/921/192. Sir William Croft referring to Jordan’s report, Cairo to Foreign Office, September 29, 1944.

*“Colonel Eddy is a man of weight and experience and the account he gave of American intentions based on his recent discussions with Mr. Cordell Hull and the State Department suggests to me that it may be time for H.M.G. to reconsider the whole basis of Anglo-American collaboration in Saudi Arabia”.*⁶⁰⁹

Stanley Jordan made a bold proposal, suggesting that the Kingdom should be split into two geographic spheres of British and American influence respectively. In many respects, Jordan’s idea ran along the lines of the Iranian model where separate British and Soviet sectors had been established. Looking at the new map proposed by Jordan, the Nejd region in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, where the oil concessions lay, would be under American influence. Meanwhile, Britain, with the Empire’s millions of Moslem subjects, would oversee the Hedjaz, Saudi Arabia’s shoreline on the Red Sea, the home of Islam’s Holy Mecca and Medina. After further scrutiny, Jordan’s plan contradicted the established aims of British policy. Namely, by dividing the Kingdom, it would reverse the hard fought “Pax Saudica”, which had taken Ibn Saud years to forge, and which also continued to be an integral aspect of the stability of *Pax Britannica* in the region. Two months before his assassination at the hands of Zionist extremists, Lord Moyne, Britain’s Minister Resident of the Middle East, noted that if the British Government was unwilling to develop the Hedjaz on a scale similar to the United States, the discrepancy between British and American power would only become further magnified. This is a charge that Jordan was ready to accept himself; that from such a policy, “we might lay ourselves open to the charges of disinterestedness in the Moslem Holy Land”.⁶¹⁰

From his perch in Cairo, writing to the Foreign Office, Moyne noticed the irony that the US, in their haste for action, was becoming too “colonial” and “paternal in their attitude to Saudi Arabia”.⁶¹¹ Moyne warned “that a fanatical Moslem population does not take the same view of the blessings of American civilisation as they do themselves”.⁶¹² Having a similar vantage point, the Foreign Office concurred, stating that the United States would cease their overambitious activities in Saudi Arabia, “only when they themselves cry enough”.⁶¹³ At the same time, it’s important to stress that the British officialdom did not refute the United States presence in Saudi Arabia. They took it as part of a greater American commitment in the Middle East region that

⁶⁰⁹ PRO: FO/921/192. Sir William Croft referring to Jordan’s report, Cairo to Foreign Office, September 29, 1944.

⁶¹⁰ PRO: FO/921/192. ‘Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia’, Jordan to Foreign Office, September 6, 1944.

⁶¹¹ PRO: FO/921/192. Lord Moyne to Foreign Office, September 18, 1944.

⁶¹² PRO: FO 921/192. Lord Moyne to Foreign Office, September 13, 1944.

⁶¹³ PRO: FO 921/192. Foreign Office Minute by Hamilton, September 12, 1944.

would benefit British security. For this reason, Lord Moyne was still able to overlook the United States' "somewhat ill-judged philanthropic policy" towards Saudi Arabia, believing that if Britain attempted to block such a venture, it would be detrimental to the general health of Anglo-American relations.⁶¹⁴ In his final evaluation, the Britain's Minister Resident emphasized the need to work well with the Americans:

*"One cannot object to what they are doing, but I feel one might object to the way they are doing it. Would with a little consultation and cooperation be more in the spirit of the Anglo- U.S. alliance and couldn't a suggestion of this be made to Washington from FO?"*⁶¹⁵

For other British officials, such as Moyne's Chief of Staff, William Croft, stressing Anglo-American cooperation was downplayed. The prospect of the United States being able to throw around largesse and implement such ambitious policies in the Kingdom was still viewed with a healthy amount of scepticism. Predicting the likelihood of a post-war global economic depression, any chance of wide-scale American development projects would be thwarted, never mind such projects being launched in a hinterland like Saudi Arabia.⁶¹⁶ Eventually, the Treasury in Washington, Croft declared, would take the reins of American policy towards Saudi Arabia, and "the curtain will fall on the fairy godmother act".⁶¹⁷

Since Saudi Arabia's independence, Britain's policy with regard to the Kingdom had been based on the strategic premise of ensuring the status quo, but what the United States was now suggesting seemed to go against that. It was one thing to subsidise Ibn Saud during difficult wartime conditions, but trying to remake the Kingdom into "Main Street USA" was something wholly different. The type of "benign" liberal internationalist foreign policy expressed by Eddy was not just a provenance of the United States; it was also the keystone to future British policy seeking to reclaim lost influence in the emerging new liberal post-war order. For Lord Moyne, His Majesty's Government used just the right amount of nous, which set the precedent in advancing the conditions of "backward peoples," through schemes like the British Colonial

⁶¹⁴ PRO: FO 921/192. Lord Moyne to Foreign Office, September, 13, 1944.

⁶¹⁵ PRO: FO 921/192. Lord Moyne to Foreign Office, September 3, 1944.

⁶¹⁶ PRO: FO 921/192. Croft commenting on Jordan's report, Cairo to Foreign Office, September 27, 1944.

⁶¹⁷ PRO: FO 371/ 45543. Foreign Office Minute, March, 17, 1945.

Development and Welfare Act of 1940.⁶¹⁸ An added arm of Britain's "soft power" in the Middle East was also the British Council on Anglo-Arab Cultural Relations (B.C.A.A.C.R). Chaired by C.W. Baxter, head of the Eastern Department in the Foreign Office, the BCAACR sent educational materials, sports equipment, English books and cartoon films to Saudi Arabia through the British legation, and Ibn Saud had welcomed the initiative.⁶¹⁹

Whereas once Britain had led talks about financial reform in Saudi Arabia, when Ibn Saud turned to Britain in November 1944 to provide him with a financial advisor, London turned down the King's request.⁶²⁰ At this point in time, Neville Butler stressed the need to preserve the status quo and claimed that Ibn Saud was "too old to change his ways at this late stage in his career".⁶²¹ Furthermore, the resentment that would be created by Saudi Arabian officials having to take advice from a British financial advisor would, according to Neville Butler, "outweigh any good achieved".⁶²² It had also been found out that the whole idea of a financial advisor was the brain child of Stanley Jordan, and not King Ibn-Saud.⁶²³ Yet, the key motive behind the Foreign Office's decision not to send a financial advisor was its aversion to alienating the United States. As William Croft explained it, from the time of the Stettinius Mission, London "began to put greater weight on Anglo-American relations than anything else and, consequently, Britain's

⁶¹⁸ PRO: FO/921/192. September 29, 1944. Moyne had presided over the colonial development related to the Moyne Commission in the Caribbean in the 1930's. For further background on colonialism as a factor in Anglo-American relations, see John J. Sbrega, *Anglo- American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia: 1941-1945* (United States: Garland Publishing, 1983) p. 124.

⁶¹⁹ The B.C.A.A.C.R. possessed a budget of £3,500,000 in 1944 to set up Arab training centres for British personnel, the formation of Agricultural colleges, the organization of archaeological activities and finally the encouragement of English as a second language in all Middle Eastern countries. See PRO: FO 370/917. Report by C.A.F. Dunbas, November 3, 1943. At same time, Foreign Office officials like RMA Hankey impressed upon the folly of Anglo-American cultural activities in this vein turning competitive in Saudi Arabia and the importance of them "complimentary" one another. See, FO 301/787 L 2944/640/410, Hankey to Jeddah, May 26, 1944. Just two months earlier, the Joint Anglo-American Film Planning Committee (JAAFPC) in March 1944 had been formed to show audiences the wartime alliance "from a truly integrated viewpoint." See Frederick Krome, 'The True Glory and the Failure of Anglo-American Film Propaganda in the Second World War' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jan., 1998), pp. 21.

⁶²⁰ Foreign Office referred to the Government of India, who originally proposed Zahid Hussein, an Indian Civil Service financial expert who was the Financial Commissioner of Railways. FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *Near East, South Asia, Africa and Middle East*, Peterson to Hull, July 21, 1944, p. 931

⁶²¹ FRUS 1944. Vol. V, *Near East and Africa*, Peterson to Hull, July 21, 1944, p. 931. & PRO: FO 371/45542. Butler to Grafftey-Smith, March 6, 1945.

⁶²² PRO: FO 371/45542. Butler to Grafftey-Smith, March 6, 1945.

⁶²³ PRO: FO 371/ 45542. Butler to Grafftey-Smith, March 6, 1945. When he was minister Stanley Jordan, had eagerly told the Foreign Office that Ibn Saud said that his country's financial administration was "like date palm wood whereas I wish it to be as sound as steel and only the British can help me in this respect." See, BL: IOR/L5/5/123, Jordan to Foreign Office, March 2, 1944.

relationship with the United States altered in Saudi Arabia”.⁶²⁴ It was thus hoped that by backing off from the financial advisor issue, this friendly acquiescence would benefit inter-allied cooperation and more importantly from the British standpoint, serve as a “useful stick to beat the Americans with in future”.⁶²⁵

With that being said, by 1945, the British Government was not ready to follow the United States’ advocacy of providing subsidies to Saudi Arabia. Before Roosevelt and Churchill were scheduled to meet with Ibn Saud that February, the Foreign Office advised the prime minister not to “broach the subsidy question” with the American president. In response, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden wrote to Churchill shortly afterwards that he had come to the conclusion that continuing to subsidize Ibn Saud on a large scale made little economic or political sense. He did not want Saudi Arabia to return to the harsh economic conditions of 1939, but at the same time he was fully aware that Riyadh’s yearly income had increased and was now “at least four times higher than immediately before the war”.⁶²⁶ If that was not enough, said Eden, it was wholly illogical for Britain to increase its subsidy, considering “the view of our foreign financial problem”.⁶²⁷ Sterling balances were at a tipping point. One report from December 1944 showed that in order to provide the pre-war level of imports needed by the United Kingdom, British exports would need to increase by fifty percent.⁶²⁸ And finally, reiterating another persistent theme of British policy, Eddy fully believed that freeing the King from Allied subsidies would be the best way to strengthen “Ibn Saud’s prestige”.⁶²⁹ Having continually viewed the ‘Special Relationship’ with a critical eye, it was natural for Anthony Eden to disagree with the Americans on the subject of Britain raising its subsidy contribution.⁶³⁰

However, over the course of that spring, the attitude of British and American policymakers toward the subsidy question began to soften. On April 17, 1945, the British Embassy in Washington sent a memorandum to the State Department, stating that it was time for

⁶²⁴ PRO: FO 921/192. Croft to Foreign Office, September 27, 1944.

⁶²⁵ PRO: FO 371/45542. Foreign Office Missive, March 5, 1945.

⁶²⁶ PRO: FO 954/15D. Microfilm, Row 3, Drawer 10. Eden to Churchill, March 31, 1945.

⁶²⁷ PRO: FO 954/15D, Microfilm, Row 3, Drawer 10. Eden to Churchill, March 31, 1945.

⁶²⁸ BL: IOR: MSSEUR F 138 /71 Gilbert Laithwaite Papers. Memorandum prepared by the External Affairs Department, October 1944. & Olaf Caroe (Government of India) to Gilbert Laithwaite, (War Cabinet Secretariat), January 3, 1945.

⁶²⁹ PRO: FO 954/15D. Microfilm, Row 3, Drawer 10. Eden to Churchill, March 31, 1945.

⁶³⁰ To gain a further insight into Anthony Eden’s career long ambivalent attitude towards the United States, see Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden: A Biography* (United States: McGraw-Hill, 1986).

a “broad policy” regarding the subsidy question to be arrived at by both parties.⁶³¹ Shortly before the United States Government came to an agreement with their British counterparts, the Director of the Office of War Mobilization, Undersecretary of the Navy, and Assistant Secretary of War met with officials of the NEA to reaffirm their commitment to Anglo-American cooperation. Unsurprisingly, this diverse group of American policymakers took a more expansive view of the issue and looked beyond the parochial tensions existing between British and American officials on the ground. They told their NEA colleagues that British officials would “be delighted to have the United States Government interested materially in Saudi Arabia, would welcome our cooperation, and that we have nothing to fear from the British”.⁶³²

In this atmosphere of evolving accord, by July 1945 Britain and the United States had reached a compromise in the form of an Anglo-American joint subsidy programme in Saudi Arabia for the upcoming calendar year. The programme would be worth over ten million dollars, including essential supplies such as 50,000 tons of cereals, 6,871,000 yards of textiles, 8,500 tires, \$114,000 worth of automobile parts, 300 tons of sugar, 120 tons of tea, plus all of the expenses paid for Saudi Arabia’s worldwide diplomatic missions.⁶³³ The British contribution had fallen to almost one-half the contribution they made in 1944.⁶³⁴ Realizing that London was unwilling to participate in a joint programme that went over a threshold of 10 million dollars, the United States added their own bonus programme, which consisted of minted Saudi Riyals worth over three million dollars, plus an array of supply items, such as trucks, writing paper, farm equipment, radio equipment, distillation plants, passenger cars, and additional items requested by Saudi Arabian officials.⁶³⁵

⁶³¹ NARA: RG 59, Lot 57 D 298, Box 5. Aide-Memoire British Embassy Washington DC to State Department, April 17, 1945.

⁶³² NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. ‘Memorandum of Conversation’ between Judge Fred. M. Vinson, Director, Office of War Mobilisation Ralph A Brad, Under Secretary of the Navy Mr. John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, Gordon Merriam and Leonard Parker, June 22, 1945.

⁶³³ NARA: RG 59, Lot 57 D298, Box 15, Record of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954. State Department memorandum, July 5, 1945.

⁶³⁴ Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*, p. 190.

⁶³⁵ Given that it was likely that Saudi Arabia would only be able to meet its balance of payments in five years’ time, the United States without British assistance took the initiative. In the summer of 1945, the State Department, the Treasury, the Army, the Navy and the Export-Import Bank discussed workable solutions to this critical problem. Loy Henderson, now heading the NEA, pressed for securing some type of loan for Saudi Arabia that would activate the construction of waterworks, sewage plants, paved roads, and harbours. These projects would not only help the country, but also facilitate the exportation of oil. On August 1, 1945, the American-based Export-Import Bank working with the State Department agreed to provide the Saudi Arabian Government with a loan worth \$5,000,000, with interest only being repaid during the first ten years at which point the loan will be repaid in five yearly

Having succeeded Stanley Jordan as British minister to Saudi Arabia in February 1945, Laurence Grafftey-Smith was reminded by his superiors that a significant part of his *modus operandi* was to bridge the gap that had appeared in Anglo-American relations under Jordan's stewardship.⁶³⁶ Very unlike a stereotypical "Colonel Blimp", the charismatic Grafftey-Smith was known to be progressive in the sense that he was a Labour Party supporter, a rare bird in the conservative flock of the British diplomatic corps. He was welcomed openly by the American legation as William Eddy happily observed, "what an improvement over his predecessor."⁶³⁷ Shortly after his arrival Grafftey-Smith, much like Jordan, also questioned the haste of the US approach: "The Americans seem to be buying many friends in Arabia, and if our policy ever becomes unwelcome to the Arabs, we have little to rely on to stop American influence."⁶³⁸

What is interesting is that while Grafftey-Smith worried about the decline of British power, throughout this period American officials thought the same thing about their own. "Too little and too late!" claimed, Major Harry R. Snyder, American military attaché to Cairo and Jeddah, lamenting what he believed to be the incoherence of American policy in the Kingdom that had been evident since the summer of 1944. Speaking to Leonard Parker of the NEA, Snyder shared his displeasure, warning that the "stakes in Saudi Arabia are so great that our cousins will stop at nothing to discredit and outbid us".⁶³⁹ Suspicious of the British Government's motives, Snyder's sentiment, however, was running counter to an NEA report that had been written by Parker, outlining the key elements of United States' policy towards Saudi Arabia, in which the importance of continuing "to cooperate with Britain..." was one of the main points emphasized.⁶⁴⁰ The frustrations displayed by Snyder therefore was less about him being anti-

instalments. See, NARA: RG 59 Lot 57 D298, Record of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs- 1941-1954, Box 5. Memorandum of Conversation by Loy Henderson, August 1, 1945.

⁶³⁶ PRO: FO 371/ 45542. Butler to Grafftey-Smith, March 6, 1945. Speaking to the British counsellor, Michael Wright, Wallace Murray was relieved that Jordan was finally dismissed because of his "generally uncooperative attitude". See FRUS. Vol. VIII, *The Near East and Africa*, Memorandum of Conversation with Wallace Murray, Michael Wright, Paul Alling and Leonard Parker, January 1, 1945, pp. 845-846.

⁶³⁶ SML: William Eddy Papers. Box 6. Eddy to Alling, July 30, 1945.

⁶³⁷ SML: William Eddy Papers. Box 6. Eddy to Alling, July 30, 1945.

⁶³⁸ PRO: FO 371/ 45542. Grafftey-Smith to Dixon, February 22, 1945.

⁶³⁹ NARA: RG 59, Lot 57 D 298, Box 5. Memorandum for Record, Harry R. Snyder, March 24, 1945.

⁶⁴⁰ The two other key points of US policy in Saudi Arabia that were highlighted in Parker's report were '*to assist in the maintenance of stability in the Near East by supporting the economy of Saudi Arabia*' and '*to afford diplomatic protection to the American-held oil concession in Saudi Arabia*'. See, LL: Van H. Engert Papers. 'United States Policy Toward Saudi Arabia: 1933-1944' Memorandum by Leonard Parker, December 7, 1944.

British, and more about what he perceived as the lack of United States' diplomatic skill in the face of shrewd British diplomacy. In March of 1945, Snyder insisted that it was:

*"...humiliating and downright infuriating to see our country out-maneuvered simply because our ponderous machinery in Washington grinds so slowly....the whole fabric of our prestige and position is breaking down, and if the United States wants anything in Saudi Arabia, somebody had better do something at once".*⁶⁴¹

When it came to wartime statecraft, American officials being outfoxed by their wily British "cousins" had been a recurrent theme of the period. The Division of Public Liaison compiled a report to try and gain a sense of the American public's view on the performance of the State Department. "This country raises politicians not diplomats...those slick fellows across the pond (the British) can buy and sell our boys anytime," said one interviewee.⁶⁴² This notion of British superiority in matters of high diplomacy was particularly felt in the Middle East. Like Snyder, Harold Hoskins also at this time noted that his visit "made more clear (*sic*) the outstanding weakness of US foreign policy in the Middle East- its apparent lack of continuity, its uncertainty and, at times, its inconsistency". Hoskins poignantly noted that British foreign policy, on the other hand, appeared more grounded regardless of the winds of political change back in the United Kingdom and this lent the British a sense of "influence and prestige...as compared with the US".⁶⁴³

Policymakers in Washington realized that the British possessed an advantage over the Americans in that included in their empire were a whole host of Moslem subjects who could generate a great deal of revenue for Saudi Arabia through their annual trek to the Holy Cities. Additionally, as Saudi Arabia was surrounded by Sterling bloc countries, Arabian merchants feared shifting their business to a more uncertain client. And finally, the British ably conveyed a sense of permanence in Saudi Arabia, which the Americans, except for the ARAMCO oilmen, could not match. William Eddy was of the opinion that the Saudi Arabians believed that the few American officials inside the country would leave once the war ended "and cannot therefore be dealt with seriously in commerce or politics". He condemned his American colleagues at the

⁶⁴¹ NARA: RG 59 Lot 57 D 298, Box 5. Memorandum for Record, Harry R. Snyder, March 24, 1945.

⁶⁴² NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350 Row 67 Compartment 22 Shelf 1 Entry 3153 Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945, Box 1. Division of Public Liaison Office of Public Information, 'Public Attitudes on Foreign Policy No. 45', November 1944.

⁶⁴³ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 8. Hoskins to Henderson July 22, 1945.

NEA over their wariness of accepting diplomatic postings in the Kingdom. This gave Ibn Saud the impression that once the Second World War ended, the Americans would return to being minor players in the region, and thus it would be a much better policy for him to keep his long-term and tested association with the British in good order.⁶⁴⁴

Some of the weak areas of American diplomacy were made abundantly clear in April 1944, when a shipment of riyals for the Saudi Arabian Government, minted in the United States, had arrived in Jeddah. While Britain had delivered its subsidies for years and proceeded without affectation, the American delivery party in contrast comprised of a detachment of no less than twenty-one United States Army officials, including a group of photographers. The fanfare was not appreciated by Saudi Arabian officials as James Landis described the mission to Dean Acheson as “pretty much a flop”.⁶⁴⁵ Likewise, Kermit Roosevelt, who was visiting Jeddah on his own Middle East mission for the OSS, had witnessed the proceedings and claimed: “One must remember the Arabs have been receiving subsidies from outsiders for generations”. According to Roosevelt, the objective of shipment delivery was “calculated to improve US relations with the Government (Saudi Arabia) and people of SA...the purpose should not be that of seeking to place an article or pictures in *Life* or *Time* Magazine”.⁶⁴⁶

As late as October 1944, the total amount of Lend-Lease extended to the Saudi Arabian government by the Americans totalled \$ 11,100,930. Regardless of this money sent to his country, the King, having never fully forgotten America’s failure to lend his country sufficient financial aid back in 1941, angrily asked William Eddy: “Whom can I rely? I cannot afford to antagonize the British”. The American contingent was caught unaware, surprised by the King’s force of feeling.⁶⁴⁷ In this instance, Ibn Saud was upset that a shipment of minted riyals worth 2,000,000 dollars that his government had purchased from the US on credit was behind schedule and would not arrive in time for that year’s Hajj.⁶⁴⁸ But coming to the rescue was the British

⁶⁴⁴ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel # 5. Eddy to Washington, June 30, 1944.

⁶⁴⁵ Kermit Roosevelt described the incident as such: “The photographer spent most of the meal period shooting off flashlight bulbs and getting candid camera shots and each course greeted by most of the Americans present with shouts to the army doctor asking whether this particular dish could be eaten. Almost invariably the doctor should back “no” The Arabs are extremely hospitable people, but they are also proud, and I cannot believe that this performance endeared us to him.” See, NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 8. State Department memorandum by Kermit Roosevelt, March 9, 1944.

⁶⁴⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 8. State Department Memorandum by Kermit Roosevelt, March 9, 1944.

⁶⁴⁷ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350 Row 67 Compartment 22 Shelf 1 Entry 3153 Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945, Box 1, Folder 000-610-1. Hart to Eddy, November 5, 1944.

⁶⁴⁸ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350 Row 67 Compartment 22 Shelf 1 Entry 3153 Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945, Box 1, Folder 000-610-1. Eddy to State Department, October 30, 1944.

legation, who in collaboration with the shipping company, Gellatly Hankey, quickly organized an emergency loan for the Saudi Arabian Government.⁶⁴⁹ Although the American deliveries eventually arrived, the bureaucratic ineffectiveness and mistakes in communication gave the impression that the United States was not sufficiently concerned during a time when the Kingdom's needs were so urgent.⁶⁵⁰ In these cases, the Foreign Office realized that, despite their own doubts of losing influence to the Americans, the British Government was still in a "happy position" in that a "cardinal point" of the King's own foreign policy was his view that Britain was the only power he could fully rely on.⁶⁵¹

Ibn Saud's Request for a Military Mission

As American and British officials weighed the benefits of their collaboration in Saudi Arabia, the Stettinius talks had made sure to note that "prompt consideration" should be given to establishing a joint Anglo-American military mission to assist Ibn Saud in training a "modern Saudi Arabian Army".⁶⁵² Other neutral nations in the region, such as Turkey and Afghanistan, had also at this time requested military missions from the Allies.⁶⁵³ Plans to jointly establish these kinds of military missions presented a host of challenges for British and American officials as their martial elements were perceived as a manifestation of a country's national power. Though a major issue in terms of the development of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud's request for a military mission has not been a prominent part of the subject's historiography.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁴⁹ NARA: T1179, Microfilm, Reel 6. Eddy to State Department, October 26, 1944.

⁶⁵⁰ Five million riyals were eventually delivered safely to the Saudi Arabian Government on November 21, 1944, and it was recommended that nine million riyals more be sent directly to Ras Tanura. See NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403, Memorandum No. 239, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. US Army Forces in Middle East Cairo to War Department, November 21, 1944.

⁶⁵¹ PRO: FO/ 371/45543. Foreign Office Memorandum, January 12, 1945.

⁶⁵² FRUS 1944 Vol. III, *British Commonwealth and Europe*, Stettinius to Hull, May 22, 1944, pp. 29-30.

⁶⁵³ LL: Van Engert Papers, Box 9, Folder 33. 'Possible Military Mission to Afghanistan', Memorandum of Conversation between Wallace Murray and Lieutenant Colonel John S. Wise, June 9, 1944.

⁶⁵⁴ As scholars go Simon Davis gives little space to the issue and only offers roughly two paragraphs. Aaron Davis Miller surprisingly makes no direct reference of the military mission controversy. See, Davis, *Contested Space*, pp. 213-214 & Miller *Search for Security*. Wm. Roger Louis in his study of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia also makes no mention of it. See, Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*. Barry Rubin briefly speaks of an American military mission, but does not explain how it impacted Anglo-American Relations. See, Rubin, 'Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia', p. 263. Alexei Vasiliev only states that in 1944 "a US military mission arrived in Saudi Arabia to train the Saudi Army, together with a group of British military instructors also invited by Ibn Saud. See, Vasiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, p 326. Thomas Lippman and Rachel Bronson do not refer to this

The plans for providing Ibn Saud with a military mission had their origins in December 1943 when Major General Ralph Royce of the United States Armed Forces in the Middle East (USAFIME) travelled to Saudi Arabia to discuss the King's military supply needs.⁶⁵⁵ That same month Britain and the United States preliminarily agreed to furnish over two million dollars worth of military equipment, split equally between the two powers.⁶⁵⁶ In March 1944, Royce, alongside his successor Brigadier General B.G. Giles, met again with Ibn Saud to further discuss the details of the Anglo-American joint supply programme; a conversation in which the King also asked Colonel Royce for the United States to establish an American mission that would train the Saudi Arabian Army.⁶⁵⁷ Although the visit of the two generals was a glaring example of American influence emerging from the shadow cast by their wartime ally, afterwards in his report, Royce stressed the importance of the United States working closely with its British counterparts.⁶⁵⁸ For the upcoming mission, the United States would instruct the Saudi Arabian army in the use of equipment, which was to be "furnished on a combined basis" with British military officials.⁶⁵⁹

Royce's view was seconded by key American officials back in Washington. For example, Henry Stimson believed that separate British and American military missions in Saudi Arabia might give the wrong impression and suggest Allied disunity. Dividing the mission into separate British and American entities, according to Stimson, would pose a grave risk of "Balkanizing" the Saudi Arabian army into competing tribal factions. Moreover, establishing separate missions once again played right into Ibn Saud's hands, as the Secretary of War saw it, pitting the two allies against the other "as a means of obtaining the assistance he desires".⁶⁶⁰ Now that Saudi Arabia was starting to play a greater part in America's grand strategy, Stimson - in response to

important event, even in relation to the advent of closer Saudi-American relations. See, Lippman, *Inside the Mirage & Bronson, Thicker than Oil*.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibn Saud requested six transport aircraft, a small arms plant, roads built considered to be of "strategic importance". Most interestingly, General Royce believed that the King was asking for too much and did not agree with expanding the Saudi Arabian Military were all recommended by General Royce to "not to be furnished at this time." See NARA: RG 59, Lot 57 D 298, Box 5 'Outline of Events Relating to U.S. Army Activities in Saudi Arabia' Report by Royce, January 4, 1944.

⁶⁵⁶ NARA: RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1715. Bowen to War Department, September 23, 1944.

⁶⁵⁷ NARA: RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1715. Memorandum Gilbert C. Cheves, April 18, 1944. Afterwards, the Royce Mission recommended that in order maintain order inside the Kingdom, "a regular Army of approximately 10,000 troops can be required to cover the nine districts of the country".

⁶⁵⁸ NARA: RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1715. Memorandum by Gilbert C. Cheves, April 18, 1944.

⁶⁵⁹ NARA: RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1715. 'Anglo-American Military Activities in SA', report by Thomas T. Handy Major General Assistant Chief of Staff, April 23, 1944.

⁶⁶⁰ NARA: RG 59/250/34/13/4, Box 5809 RG 165. Stimson to Hull, May 1, 1944.

the talk of a military mission - had written Cordell Hull in May 1944: "It is the opinion of the War Department that it would be highly desirable to establish a definite policy of Anglo-American cooperation in affairs pertaining to Saudi Arabia, based on an understanding that the interests of both nations will be mutually respected".⁶⁶¹

A month later, the State Department backed a plan that would allow London to take part and help organize a mission that would train Saudi Arabian armed forces under joint Anglo-American auspices.⁶⁶² But from the beginning, the British Government was not sold on the military mission idea. On one level, helping Ibn Saud in this capacity still held a wide range of strategic benefits for Britain. The Foreign Office understood the advantages that came with the mission as the United States would be "heavily committed in the defence of Saudi Arabia and therefore of the Middle East generally".⁶⁶³ Furthermore, taking part in the military mission afforded Britain the opportunity to smooth over any frayed feelings with the King in light of the decision to decrease Britain's financial commitment to Saudi Arabia. Indeed, Stanley Jordan argued that if British officials did not participate, it would be interpreted by Ibn Saud as Britain surrendering its influence in the Kingdom.⁶⁶⁴ Jordan had informed the Foreign Office that shortly after Royce's visit in March, Ibn Saud had secretly told him that the "Americans were prepared to train his army but that he looked to us for the assistance he required".⁶⁶⁵ Warning the Foreign Office, Jordan wrote: "I cannot stress too strongly the importance" that Ibn Saud attached to receiving military experts, and a British refusal "would cause him grave disappointment".⁶⁶⁶

But at the same time, policymakers back in London also appreciated the many complex considerations, which might arise while supplying Ibn Saud with a military mission. To start, British officials were uneasy about the possibility of a conflict between cultures, which might be the result of fielding a military mission composed of "Christian Elements" in the home of Islam. At the Foreign Office, Thomas Wikeley made this observation when he noted: "we could

⁶⁶¹ NARA: RG 59/250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Stimson to Hull, May 1, 1944.

⁶⁶² FRUS. Vol. 5, *Near East, South Asia, Africa and Middle East*, Winant to Secretary of State, June 9, 1944, p. 704.

⁶⁶³ PRO: FO 371 45543. 'Ibn Saud's Request for a British Military Mission', Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

⁶⁶⁴ PRO: FO 921/192. Jordan to Foreign Office & Cairo, May 20, 1944. Jordan used the same term "Horn in" when explaining the US desire to get in the Military Mission. This was the exact term on February 22, 1944 that Churchill used in his correspondence to President Roosevelt that Britain had no desire to "Horn in" on American oil interests in Saudi Arabia. W. Kimball, Ed, *Churchill and Roosevelt-the Complete Correspondence* (Princeton Press, New Jersey) 1984. p.744.

⁶⁶⁵ BL: IOR R/15/5/123. India Office London to Government of India, New Delhi, Repeated to Political Resident Bushire, March 20, 1944.

⁶⁶⁶ BL: IOR R/15/5/123. Jordan to Foreign Office, March, 2, 1944.

perhaps point out that it is a question of balancing the advantage of obtaining some trained Saudi pilots against the disadvantage of having a lot of non-Moslem pilots flying about the country and possibly violating the sanctity of the Holy Places”.⁶⁶⁷ Moreover, such a venture would deliver a propaganda coup to Ibn Saud’s Arab rivals and the Axis powers as the King would be accused of handing the Holy Places over to foreign interests.⁶⁶⁸

These were the reasons why Stanley Jordan believed that Ibn Saud had been reluctant to agree to US military officials training Saudi soldiers because - unlike the British the Americans were unable to send Sunni Moslem officers. Although Simon Davis has quoted William Eddy, praising the “professional success” of the US military officials in Saudi Arabia to try and make the point of American ascendancy, during the same period, Eddy had his own doubts about their ability to mingle with Saudi officials.⁶⁶⁹ When Eddy had first visited Saudi Arabia in April 1944, he witnessed a small band of American personnel under the command of Colonel Garrett Shomber, who were there to deliver a small cache of military equipment to Saudi Arabian authorities. After the transaction Eddy had come to the conclusion that the local reaction to the American presence was “not too good”.⁶⁷⁰ It was incidents like this, which led the Foreign Office to believe that only British soldiers were “capable of establishing just that sort of informal and friendly understanding which the Arabs appreciated.”⁶⁷¹

But regardless of their confidence, British officials wanted to assist Ibn Saud militarily only up to a certain point. Under no conditions did they want to give the Saudi Arabian King the tools to act aggressively, say against other British allies in the Middle East, such as the Hashemite kingdoms. Indeed, the great fear from London’s perspective was that if Ibn Saud attacked Iraq over unresolved borders issues, treaty obligations would mean that Britain would

⁶⁶⁷ PRO: FO 371/40251 E 6629/63/25. Minute by Wikeley, November 1, 1944.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibn Saud’s Hashemite nemesis, King Abdullah, referred to his Saudi adversary as a “*son of a dog*.” See, Mary C. Wilson’s *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p.34.

⁶⁶⁹ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 214.

⁶⁷⁰ Eddy had been critical of the fact that American military officials had donned helmets, rather than traditional Arab headdress, which evoked suspicion amongst the Saudi Arabian populace. Compounding the poor showing, the United States had delivered their military equipment late, a problem all the more accentuated by the fact that the British had always had a reputation of effectively delivering its share of Anglo-American supplies. Although Shomber’s delivery was offered to Ibn Saud as an American undertaking, following the unannounced arrival of eight members of a British military mission, the gossip in the *souk* had been that the British would lead as per usual. See, NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Eddy to Washington, June 30, 1944.

⁶⁷¹ PRO: FO 371/ 45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

be bound to favour the former in “active opposition to the American backing the Saudis”.⁶⁷² The Foreign Office missive sent to the American Embassy in London that summer articulated this view, agreeing that Ibn Saud should be sent sufficient materiel, while reiterating that military training and provision of arms that went beyond the narrow ambit of internal security in Saudi Arabia would be a serious mistake:

*“In the first place, it is impossible to foretell how these arms might be used in the period of political uncertainty in Arabia which is likely to follow in Ibn Saud’s death. Secondly, the acquisition by Ibn Saud of large quantities of arms might very easily have the effect of alarming neighbouring countries. Thirdly, there is the probability that the arms would be smuggled into Palestine...”*⁶⁷³

With that being said, the British Government, still finalized the substantial Anglo-American military supply programme for Saudi Arabia in 1944 that included: 50 light reconnaissance cars, 500 light machine guns, 10,000 rifles and ammunition.⁶⁷⁴

Despite this fact, the third reason for the lack of British enthusiasm towards the joint Allied military mission was that it was not deemed practical. It is true that Britain and the United States had successfully executed *Operation Overlord* in the summer of 1944, a feat that the historian Max Hastings called “the greatest organization achievement of the Second World War...”, but fighting alongside one another and assimilating each nation's military personnel to train a third party’s army was an entirely different matter.⁶⁷⁵ For this sort of assignment, the two allies had their own distinct protocols, guidelines and equipment that were not always interchangeable. As Stanley Jordan’s successor, Laurence Grafftey-Smith saw things, an Anglo-American joint military mission was a problematic proposition, largely because of the confusion materializing from “two different sets of equipment and the two, no doubt, divergent conceptions of, and what, the Saudis were to be taught”.⁶⁷⁶

The Anglo-American joint military mission was withdrawn largely due to Britain’s misgivings. But it is important to note, however, that the fourth and final justification for

⁶⁷² PRO: FO 371 45543. ‘Ibn Saud’s Request for a British Military Mission’, Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

⁶⁷³ NARA: RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1715. American Embassy in London to State, August 3, 1944.

⁶⁷⁴ NARA: RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1715. American Embassy in London to State, August 3, 1944.

⁶⁷⁵ Quoted from Lynne Olson’s *Citizens of London*. See, Lynne Olson, *Citizens of London* (United States: Random House, 2010) p. 314.

⁶⁷⁶ PRO: FO 371/45543. ‘Ibn Saud’s Request for a British Military Mission’, Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

opposing it was that British officials like Grafftey-Smith felt that it would have a detrimental impact on Anglo-American relations. “The disadvantage of a joint mission, and, to a lesser extent, of two separate missions,” said Grafftey-Smith “is that there would probably be a certain amount of rivalry between the two teams...”⁶⁷⁷ Therefore, when in November of 1944, Saudi Arabian Minister of Defence, Amir Mansour (Ibn Saud’s son), had requested sole British assistance in reorganizing Saudi Arabia’s armed forces under traditional British lines, much like the Arab Legion in Transjordan. Mansour’s request highlighted the delicate political balancing act underlying the military mission issue. Much like the considerations surrounding Ibn Saud’s request for a financial advisor, if the mission was supplied to Saudi Arabian authorities, the British Legation in Jeddah was under the impression that American officials in response would react “most violently”.⁶⁷⁸

Consequently, London buried its head in the sand, as it were, but a small British mission did appear outside of Jeddah in the mountain city of Taif in February 1945.⁶⁷⁹ This was largely a symbolic gesture, meant to placate the Saudi Arabian government without aggravating the United States, and was quickly dismantled.⁶⁸⁰ While the wider political pressures of maintaining transatlantic harmony had always encompassed British thinking in Saudi Arabia, on this specific occasion, they acquiesced to the Americans in the hope that by doing so, the gesture would bring the two closer together.

Dhahran Airfield and the New Frontiers of Anglo-American Relations

As Britain and the United States were unable to come to terms over implementing a joint Anglo-American military mission in Saudi Arabia, they also found themselves dealing with the issue of the United States desire to construct an airfield in Dhahran.⁶⁸¹ For both Britain and the

⁶⁷⁷ PRO: FO 371/45543. ‘Ibn Saud’s Request for a British Military Mission’, Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

⁶⁷⁸ PRO: FO 371/45543. ‘Ibn Saud’s Request for a British Military Mission’, Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

⁶⁷⁹ FRUS 1945. Vol. VIII, *Near East, South Asia, Africa and Middle East*, Eddy to State Department, April 9, 1945, p. 872.

⁶⁸⁰ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 214.

⁶⁸¹ While the Dhahran Airfield story has been covered extensively from the vantage point of Saudi-American relations, the Anglo-American angle has been far less studied. Arguably, the most extensive study of the subject has been offered by Parker Hart. His account is part memoir, part history from his recollections as the Vice Consul in Dhahran. See, Hart, ‘Diplomacy of an Airbase’, *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Birth of a Security Partnership* (Indiana: Bloomington Press, 1998) p. 12-20. Also see, Davis, *Contested Space*, pp. 181-183, 213-217. Miller,

United States, any subject pertaining to aviation would be a fundamental part of their own foreign policy strategies as it helped to fasten together their diverse points of influence around the globe into an integrated system. With the Allied war effort continuing apace, building an airfield in Saudi Arabia had the unintended effect of further blurring the lines of what constituted civil and military aviation - was it related to the military exigency, or the exclusive objective of long-term national planning? In some respects, the historian Alan Dobson is not guilty of hyperbole when he calls Anglo-American aviation rivalry during the Second World War the "Other Air-Battle".⁶⁸²

The United States Government's plan to construct an airfield in Dhahran had its origins in the Allied search for air routes in Saudi Arabia in 1942, when Britain and the United States had worked closely together under an Anglo-American umbrella. And just like in 1942, seeking Ibn Saud's consent to construct an airfield in Dhahran, the Americans turned once again to Britain for diplomatic assistance. In June 1944, Major General Donald H. Connolly of the United States Forces in the Middle East (USAFIME) had been told by his superiors in Washington that in relation to the airfield, "a British officer would visit King Ibn Saud and represent combined American and British interests". Almost immediately, however, the American Legation in Jeddah wondered openly if the British-led proposal was going to be presented to the King as an Anglo-American joint venture, or as separate British and American initiatives. Soon after, news came that Ibn Saud had rejected the American proposals while rumours emerged that the British legation in their discussions with Ibn Saud had unilaterally, without Washington's knowledge, requested permission to build an airfield of their own. Taking this story to be the truth, in Connolly's view, the "choice of having a field of our own, or sharing one with the British, gives rise to no doubt in my mind, the former is preferable".⁶⁸³

In one of his first orders of business as American minister, Eddy sought to get to the bottom of the mystery to see if Connolly's accusations of British meddling in the airfield affair were true. He found no evidence of a British officer even visiting Riyadh, possessing the

Search for Security, p. 132. Rubin, *Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia* p. 263. Fred H. Lawson, 'The Iranian Crisis and the Spiral Model of International Conflict' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (Aug., 1989) pp. 310-312. See, James Gormly, 'Keeping the Door Open in Saudi Arabia: The United States and the Dhahran Airfield, 1945-1946', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (April, 1980) pp. 191-201.

⁶⁸² See, Alan Dobson, *Peaceful Air Warfare: The United States, Britain, and the Politics of International Aviation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁶⁸³ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Headquarters Persian Gulf Command United States Army. Office of the Commanding General. Major General Donald H. Connolly to Brigadier General C.R. Smith, June 27, 1944.

authority to represent both American and British interests, or for that matter, that British representatives had prejudiced the USAFIME airfield request. Yet, in October 1944, there was a curious episode in which the new American consulate in Dhahran reported that a British survey party from Bahrain was inquiring about “aerodromes” and were calling themselves “technicians”.⁶⁸⁴ Eddy was adamant that the British survey team’s appearance was an “unfriendly act constituting anti-American coercion of Saudi Government and restriction to Allied War effort...”⁶⁸⁵ Commenting on the British provocation in Dhahran, Eddy from his perch as the new American minister wryly noted, perhaps it is a test of equal opportunities for US and British cooperation in Saudi Arabia”.⁶⁸⁶ Like Connolly, Eddy was now strongly committed to the United States operating its own airfields, without having to share facilities with the British.⁶⁸⁷

There were influential American voices who took a noticeably different view, including Wallace Murray who speaking to Adolf Berle believed that the charges laid out against the British survey team were baseless, and that British authorities had by no means pressured Ibn Saud into refusing the American request for airfields.⁶⁸⁸ However, Murray’s superior, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, remained suspicious of British manoeuvring. He claimed that the latest airfield controversy was evidence of Britain reverting to “dog eat dog” policies...”⁶⁸⁹ Writing to the American Ambassador in London, John Winant, on October 17, 1944, Hull, opined: “A covert contest which begins to assume unpleasant proportions is prevailing over airfields in the Middle East.” Hull asked Winant in London to speak to Anthony Eden and tell the Foreign Secretary that the airfield saga had “made an extremely painful impression here Washington”; in part because it was symptomatic of a broader trend of unilateral British policymaking that was interpreted as contradictory to the spirit of the Stettinius declaration.⁶⁹⁰

That October, not to be outdone, the British Government had also accused William Eddy of acting in an underhanded fashion. Eddy had alerted the British legation that the United States military aircraft would no longer carry civilian personnel en route from Jeddah to Cairo that were

⁶⁸⁴ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350 Row 67 Compartment 22 Shelf 1 Entry 3153 Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945, Box 1. Eddy to Parker T. Hart, October 7, 1944.

⁶⁸⁵ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Tuck to State Department, October 6, 1944.

⁶⁸⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Tuck to State Department, October 6, 1944.

⁶⁸⁷ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Eddy to State Department, August 9, 1944.

⁶⁸⁸ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Murray to Berle, October 10, 1944.

⁶⁸⁹ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Cordell Hull to Winant, October 17, 1944.

⁶⁹⁰ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Cordell Hull to Winant, October 17, 1944.

not directly related to the war effort.⁶⁹¹ Not surprisingly, British officials were affronted by Eddy's comment, viewing them not only as an insult from an ally, but also as very foolish. While Benjamin F. Giles, Commanding General of USAFIME, would later overrule Eddy's decision, British officials were more annoyed that the American minister had been seeking out greater air rights for the United States from the King without informing the British legation. Indeed in their view, Eddy had used the airfield issue as a smokescreen to acquire civil air-rights in Saudi Arabia for the American airline, Trans World Airlines (TWA).

British officials like Captain C.E. Colbeck, the military attaché of the British legation in Jeddah, complained that "it is fortunate that we now know he (Colonel Eddy) is prepared to misrepresent the position in order to further his own case."⁶⁹² Later, Laurence Grafftey-Smith would suggest to London that they could also play Eddy's devious game, organizing it so that the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) could make a proposal to equip Ibn Saud with "a small civil aviation unit for passenger/freight transport within Saudi Arabia".⁶⁹³ In Washington, Paul Alling sought to assuage British authorities and tried to explain away the American minister's indiscretion. He stated that Eddy's request for civil air rights had been couched - not solely as an American endeavour - but in terms of Anglo-American collaboration: "We were thus, in effect, opening up the field to the British as well to an American".⁶⁹⁴ Although the flap over Eddy's actions had been unfortunate, the stated goal of the Stettinius talks was still intact. As such, the "general policy of cooperation between Ministers in Saudi Arabia", said Alling, "remained unchanged, so far as we were concerned".⁶⁹⁵

While British officials did not take kindly to Eddy's subterfuge, they agreed with him that the United States had a right to establish its own commercial aviation interests in the Kingdom. Simon Davis has explained the air issue in terms of subservience, stating that "British

⁶⁹¹ PRO: FO/921/192. Foreign Office to Jeddah, Distribution-M.D. Internal "A", Brigadier Clayton, October 25, 1944.

⁶⁹² PRO: FO/ 921/192. Near East Department Report, November 1, 1944. Taken in its context, the statement by Colbeck is not necessarily to be seen as an indictment of Anglo-American relations, but Britain's general annoyance with William Eddy.

⁶⁹³ PRO: FO 371 45543. 'Ibn Saud's Request for British Military Mission', Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945. Ironically TWA followed this line of thinking and made an agreement with Ibn Saud in 1946 to form and train "Saudi Arabian owned airline which would become known as Saudia Airlines. See, Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, p. 126.

⁶⁹⁴ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Memorandum of Conversation by Gordon Merriam, 'Civil Air Rights In Saudi Arabia' June 15, 1945.

⁶⁹⁵ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Memorandum of Conversation by Gordon Merriam, 'Civil Air Rights In Saudi Arabia' June 15, 1945.

diplomats in Washington sacrificed ...civil aviation in search for broader Anglo-American harmony".⁶⁹⁶ Yet, the issue needs to be placed within the greater political context of the time. It needs to be considered in light of the International Aviation Conference that had taken place in Chicago in November and December 1944 during which 54 nations of the world sought to "make arrangements for the immediate establishment of provisional world air routes and services".⁶⁹⁷ From there, Britain and the United States governments began negotiations with Riyadh on the question of Fifth Freedom Rights in Saudi Arabia, which pertained to liberalizing rules concerning the right of one nation to fly to another nation. Though at times quarrelsome, the fact that the United States had a foot in the door with regard to Saudi Arabia's civil aviation sphere was largely considered a *fait accompli* and helped the whole issue from becoming more combative. Indeed, a year later in 1945, the NEA would concede that it was in the long-term interest of the United States to strive to collaborate with Britain on air right issues in Saudi Arabia on equal and open terms.⁶⁹⁸

Relations between London and Washington in the autumn of 1944 still remained uneasy as another tangential issue was further complicating the Dhahran airfield matter. Similar to the East India Company of the previous century, the British company, Cable & Wireless Ltd., was synonymous with British imperialism. Its technological innovations had helped London communicate with its vast worldwide empire.⁶⁹⁹ Since 1926, in return for Britain's recognition of his independence, Ibn Saud had among other things granted Cable & Wireless Ltd. a concession to provide electronic communication throughout the nascent state. Although this arrangement was monopolistic in nature, the King continuously renewed the British contract throughout the 1930s and 1940s without concerning himself with the growing American presence in his kingdom.⁷⁰⁰ That October in 1944, American complaints were raised that the Cable & Wireless

⁶⁹⁶ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 219-220.

⁶⁹⁷ Dobson, 'The Other Air Battle: The American Pursuit of Post War Aviation Rights' *The Historic Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June, 1985) pp. 437-439. For an outline of the air agreements that were signed, see, MacGill University: 'Convention on International Civil Aviation, signed at Chicago on December 7, 1944 Chicago Convention' www.mcgill.ca/files/iasl/~HEAD=NNS_chicago1944_a.pdf

⁶⁹⁸ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Henderson to Secretary of State, November 14, 1945.

⁶⁹⁹ To see how wireless and telegraphic communication played in imperial management, see, Paul Kennedy, (ed.) 'Imperial Cable Communication and Strategy: 1870-1914', *War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914* (London: Unwin, 1979) pp.75-98.

⁷⁰⁰ The company's terms of agreement were renewable automatically at five year intervals unless notice was given before December 1st preceding a year divisible by five. After notice, modifications would be made within the next six months. See- Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, p. 24.

Ltd. only served Britain and its imperial byways while excluding Saudi Arabia's contact with United States. This was a major problem since the American legation in Jeddah at this stage did not possess equipment with mechanical or electronic encryption. What's more, rather than discuss the issue with his British counterpart, Eddy complained directly to Ibn Saud, a move that for a short time caused an added rift in Anglo-American relations.

After hearing of the incident Wallace Murray apologised to his British colleagues over William Eddy's lack of protocol, agreeing that his actions had been counterproductive to the spirit of Anglo-American cooperation. He did mention, however, that strategic communications in this area of the world were now an essential part of American national security.⁷⁰¹ Seeking to be good allies, the British were willing to accept a modification to the Cable & Wireless Ltd. agreement.⁷⁰² Even Stanley Jordan acknowledged that "because of an exclusive concession to Cable & Wireless Ltd, our critics here will be given a concrete issue on which to attack us." Putting Anglo- American cooperation first, Jordan agreed that the United States had made a reasonable request, and that it was a "matter of interest to us both in the prosecution of the war and as a matter of one Ally helping the other".⁷⁰³ The contretemps was eventually solved that October when Cable & Wireless made their services available to the American legation in Jeddah, the consulate in Dhahran and the facilities of ARAMCO.⁷⁰⁴

With the hurdles over civil air rights and telecommunications having been overcome, the scholar James Gormly has argued that in attempting to build the Dhahran airfield, US officials still viewed, "the British...as the major obstacle".⁷⁰⁵ However, early as October 1944, the British embassy in Washington was the main source of inspiration offering the best advice to the Americans on the best means to procure London's support. The Counsellor of the British Embassy, Michael Wright, working in close collaboration with Wallace Murray stated to him that it was imperative to stress to authorities in London the military necessity of the airfield. "Make no mention of any post-war civil aviation rights since that would be sure to cause endless

⁷⁰¹ Davis, *Contested Space*, 184.

⁷⁰² PRO: FO/921/192. 'Cable and Wireless Station', Jordan to Foreign Office, November 11, 1944.

⁷⁰³ PRO: FO/921/192. 'Cable and Wireless Station', Jordan to Foreign Office, November 11, 1944.

⁷⁰⁴ PRO: FO 371 45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, October 22, 1944. Looking back a year later from 1945, Jordan's replacement Grafftey-Smith did not appreciate what he perceived as the United States' strong arm methods", but he did concede that it had helped to "remove one source of American ill-will." See, PRO: FO 371/45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 22, 1945.

⁷⁰⁵ Gormly, 'Keeping the Door Open in Saudi Arabia', p.195.

delay in London,” claimed Wright.⁷⁰⁶ The British Air Marshall Chief of the Middle East, Sir Charles Medhurst, had originally opposed American plans for a military field in Dhahran believing that British bases in the area would be adequate for the Allied war effort’s ongoing shift to the Pacific.⁷⁰⁷ That month, the War Department therefore made the case that the RAF controlled airbase in Bahrain - located on the island of Muharak - was unsuitable for this task. They explained to British authorities that the airbase was too small and expansion was impossible as the ground on the island was made up of unstable deposits of fossiliferous and sea shell lime. Instead, Dhahran was a much more desirable location, allowing for an estimated 2000 landings for military related activities a month.⁷⁰⁸ From their discussions with British military authorities in the Middle East, the War Department had sharpened its analysis of the British Government’s regional concerns when it came to an American airfield in Dhahran. In a memorandum drafted for Paul Alling on November 22, 1944, the War Department explained:

*“Should the British be concerned about possible desires for Saudi Arabian interests on the part of nations other than Great Britain and the United States, it seems reasonable to expect that they would willing to aid in securing the King’s approval for an entirely American military air field at Dhahran which could used by British aircraft, if necessary”.*⁷⁰⁹

Not wanting to alienate its two Allied benefactors, the Saudi Arabian Government would prefer, said Alling, that if an airfield was to be operated by the United States, it would likely only be granted under joint Anglo-American tenancy.⁷¹⁰ Alling’s appeal exhibits once again that beyond the squabbles, the State Department recognized that American policy in Saudi Arabia was still intimately connected to the continuity of British influence.

In January 1945 President Roosevelt approved in principle the State and War Departments and Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) plan to create an air mission headed by Colonel Voris Connor that would help train Saudi pilots and ground crew, as well as offering equipment and medical assistance. In return, the United States Government hoped to receive

⁷⁰⁶ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Cordell Hull to Winant, October 17, 1944.

⁷⁰⁷ Rubin, ‘Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia’, p. 263.

⁷⁰⁸ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum by the War Department for the State Department, Colonel J.W. Colonel, Chief, Mediterranean Theater Section to Paul Alling, November 22, 1944.

⁷⁰⁹ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum by the War Department for the State Department, Colonel J.W. Colonel, Chief, Mediterranean Theater Section to Paul Alling, November 22, 1944.

⁷¹⁰ NARA: Microfilm T1179, Reel 5. Memorandum by the War Department for the State Department, Colonel J.W. Colonel, Chief, Mediterranean Theater Section to Paul Alling, November 22, 1944.

preferential treatment with regards to planned airfield in Dhahran.⁷¹¹ American officials, however, did not notify the British legation in Jeddah of this latest gambit. This bit of information has in turn been used by some scholars to attack the notion that Britain and the United States were allies in Saudi Arabia in the first months of 1945, but this particular event has been largely misconstrued.⁷¹² The State Department in fact *did* inform their British counterparts, but only in Washington. Wallace Murray disclosed to Michael Wright that the reason for this concealment was specifically laid at the door of Stanley Jordan's "generally uncooperative attitude in the past".⁷¹³ The irony is that there were British officials in Jeddah who were still convinced that the United States could function as a bulwark for British security in the Middle East and responded positively to the news of American intentions. Expressing such a view, C.E. Colbeck writing to the Foreign Office stated that Ibn Saud would be "perfectly justified" in accepting American methods of training and experiencing first-hand modern aviation, communication and airfield development schemes.⁷¹⁴

When considering the proposed Connor mission, it is important to note that instead of jumping at the American offer, the King immediately alerted the British legation, consulting with them on the pros and cons of developing a closer relationship with the US authorities. The scholar Clive Leatherdale in his writings has tried to highlight the point that "through diplomatic relations with the US Ibn Saud had found his counter-balance to Britain", but on this particular occasion, it was turned the other way around.⁷¹⁵ The British minister, Laurence Grafftey-Smith, was circumspect in his appraisal of the situation. Not wanting to compromise Ibn Saud's trust, the British legation in their dealings with American officials pretended to know nothing of the United States' unilateral offer. Laying heavy emphasis on the King's self-reliance, Grafftey-Smith took a subtle approach, advising Ibn Saud to do what was in his country's best interest.⁷¹⁶ The King felt that too much foreign military assistance as envisioned by the United States would

⁷¹¹ The proposed American mission was quite large consisting of 49 officers and 110 enlisted men ready to give air and ground force instruction. See, NARA: RG 59, Lot 57 D 298, Box 5, Memorandum for Record, Harry R. Snyder, March 24, 1945.

⁷¹² Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 210.

⁷¹³ FRUS 1945. Vol. VIII, *The Near East and Africa*, Memorandum of Conversation with Wallace Murray, Michael Wright, Paul Alling and Leonard Parker, January 1, 1945, pp. 845-846.

⁷¹⁴ PRO: FO/ 921/192. Colbeck to Foreign Office, January 11, 1945.

⁷¹⁵ Leatherdale, *Imperial Oasis*, p. 310.

⁷¹⁶ PRO: FO 371/ 45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 12, 1945.

raise the ire of his Wahhabist subjects. As a result, Ibn Saud turned down Washington's offer, an act that took American officialdom by surprise.⁷¹⁷

American officials, notably acting Secretary of State, Joseph Grew, blamed London for the King's decision which aligns with the historiography's emphasis on confrontation.⁷¹⁸

Commenting on the subject, Simon Davis has taken the nuanced view of suggesting that American frustration came from Washington's hope that London's support would "disguise US ambitions" from Saudi Arabian officials, who were becoming increasingly disenchanted about the scale of American intervention.⁷¹⁹ However, inferring that Britain was a political pawn in Washington's diplomatic game distorts the fact that British officials had ascended to a unique strategic position, serving as a diplomatic intermediary between their two close allies, the United States and Ibn Saud.

When the next round of discussions on the Dhahran airfield went ahead that spring, American officials in Jeddah were instructed to negotiate with the Saudi Arabian Government only once Ibn Saud was informed that British had finally acquiesced to the proposal.⁷²⁰ Writing on the subject, the scholar Fred Lawson has stated that throughout this time period, British officials "voiced persistent opposition to the project".⁷²¹ However, on April 17, 1945, Edward Stettinius informed US officials in Jeddah that the British Chiefs of Staff had come around to the American view and "concur[red] in our proposal to construct a military airfield at Dhahran...and is prepared to support our case to King Abdul Aziz should we so request." For their support, British forces in return would be given fly over and landing privileges at the airfield.⁷²² Less than a month later, British minister Laurence Grafftey-Smith met with the Saudi minister Youssef Yassin and prevailed upon him to effect his government's support of the construction of an airfield in Dhahran because of "its essential importance to the joint war effort in the Far East".⁷²³

⁷¹⁷ Miller, *Search for Security*, p.140.

⁷¹⁸ Miller, *Search for Security*, p.140.

⁷¹⁹ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 213-217. Aaron David Miller's states that the US Joint Chiefs of Staff ended up only accepting the plan for an airfield in Dhahran if it came with British acceptance of the Dhahran Airfield was a key reason for why the US was able to proceed in constructing it, but strangely, he offers no background information surrounding Britain's role with regard to the issue. See, Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 131-132.

⁷²⁰ NARA: RG 59, Lot 57 D 298, Box 5. Memorandum for Record by Harry R. Snyder, Cairo to State Department, March 24, 1945.

⁷²¹ Lawson, *The Iranian Crisis of 1945-1946*, p. 311.

⁷²² NARA: Microfilm T1179 LM 168, Reel 4. Stettinius to Jeddah, April 17, 1945.

⁷²³ NARA: Microfilm T1179 LM 168, Reel 4. Copy of missive from Grafftey Smith to Yassin, May 6, 1945.

Still acknowledged as the leading hegemonic power in the Middle East, it was not in the interest of Ibn Saud to alienate Britain. Once the Saudi Arabian Government had London's backing, construction and the Connor Mission was given the go-ahead that summer and the Dhahran airfield would be completed by American engineers in May 1946. From this point onwards, the airfield issue would become one of the key pillars for Anglo-American security arrangements *vis-a-vis* the Soviet Union during the Cold War.⁷²⁴ Summing up the Dhahran airfield episode, it is undeniable that the subject created a certain amount of consternation on both sides. Yet, writing about this event years later, Parker Hart, who at the time was the American Vice Consul in Dhahran said that British approval had opened the way for the United States to gain an airfield, but also helped to achieve better Anglo-American cooperation".⁷²⁵

Conclusion

The arrival in Saudi Arabia of American minister William Eddy signalled that the Anglo-American relationship had shifted into a new phase. In view of American policymakers linking Saudi Arabia to their country's national security, Eddy had announced to his British colleagues that the United States sought to expand its policies in Saudi Arabia. By September of 1944, British officials had realized for quite some time that all forms of Anglo-American cooperation would have to go hand-in-hand with the United States playing a significantly greater role in the affairs of Saudi Arabia. While at times it seemed that American and British attitudes towards Saudi Arabia were moving in different directions, the search for greater Anglo-American cooperation carried on in spite of this.

A large part of the controversy arising from the main issues covered in this chapter stemmed from a debate that had been the subject of discussions since 1941. What were the limits with regard to the scale of Anglo-American intervention in Saudi Arabia and would it have a reverse effect of weakening Al-Saud authority, thus putting the various interests of the British and American in jeopardy? British officials remained convinced that offering excessive aid to Ibn Saud did not serve their national interests. In a growing climate of austerity, combined with imperial priorities that outweighed Britain's concerns in Saudi Arabia, London was both

⁷²⁴ Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, p. 66. And see, Bronson, *Thicker than Oil*, p.25.

⁷²⁵ Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, p. 20.

politically and financially unable to press forward with policies primarily based on significant amounts of largesse.

When it came to dealing with the contemporaneous issues of Ibn Saud's request for a military mission and the US' aim to build an airfield in Dhahran, Anglo-American agreement was still sought after by both powers. From the American perspective, fulfilling Ibn Saud's request for a military mission was part of a wider national strategy in which aid in this form buttressed the Saudi-American partnership. But British officials saw things differently. A military mission of the nature proposed by the United States would weaken the king's sovereign status, which would injure Britain's panoply of regional interests. The subject of building an American airfield in Dhahran, on the other hand, had more to do with the wartime concern of supplying Allied military activities in the Pacific theatre. Both the US and Britain were wary of dealing with the airfield issue because it touched on more contentious debates like civil aviation, telecommunications and questions of regional power. But what is most striking is that the historiography has played down the fact that diplomatic solutions were found by the allies which would eventually resolve these areas of discord. The British Government continued to be a strong influence in Saudi Arabia and in turn the United States looked to the weight of their wartime ally's diplomatic power, viewing it as an effective channel to gain Ibn Saud's acceptance to the airfield project. In return, British forces were given free access to use the airfield, which offered another layer to Britain's own security in the Middle East.

Anglo-American cooperation was not always a smooth or straight road. There is no doubt that Britain and the United States worked together on some issues better than others in Saudi Arabia. Difference in policy priorities and the hegemonic controversies attached to them sometimes made collaboration difficult. However, although the high expectations of the Stettinius Mission proved to be out of reach, the strategic interests of the United States and Britain in Saudi Arabia continued to be correlative in character. In trying to find an effective arrangement for an Anglo-American partnership, the ongoing paradigm can be observed in the final chapter as the Second World War wound down and the two allies faced the new and quickly approaching challenge of the post-war world.

Chapter-VII

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1945: The Post-War World

Introduction

On February 12, 1945, with great public fanfare, President Roosevelt met Ibn Saud aboard the *USS Quincy* in Great Bitter Lake. This event has been interpreted by many historians as a moment when the “American Century” would be empowered by Saudi Arabian oil, while at the same time it indirectly inferred the waning of British influence more broadly.⁷²⁶ Unsurprisingly, the event left an indelible mark on the way that Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War has been construed, serving to cast the subject in terms of hegemonic rivalry. This final chapter challenges this perception and affirms that the Roosevelt-Ibn Saud meeting did not in fact eliminate British power from the Kingdom, nor did it mark the end of Anglo-American interaction there.

Though Britain had lost some of its power in the intervening war years, its prestige in the Middle East remained a source of its strategic strength. Certainly, Washington still found London’s influence to be irksome at times, but American policymakers could not deny the significant part that British statecraft continued to play in Saudi Arabia. As this chapter will show, even when tensions arose in 1945 over issues such as when the King declared war against Germany, or when Saudi Arabia joined the United Nations, it was the fact that close Anglo-American consultation had not been adhered to that proved to be the main source of controversy. Indeed, the transitory nature of international geopolitics at the time made it imperative for Britain and the United States to hold fast to the idea that greater Anglo-American accord was possible, especially in the uncertain political terrain that was the Middle East.

⁷²⁶ There are many historical accounts of the Ibn Saud-Roosevelt meeting. For some of the most notable examples, see Davis, *Contested Space*, pp. 195-199. Van der Meulen, *The Wells of Ibn Saud*, pp. 164-166. Howarth, *King Ibn Saud*, pp. 203-209. Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 326-327. Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, pp. 36-39. Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 128-131. Gardner, *Three Kings*, pp. 19-25. Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, pp. 27-29. Lippman, ‘The Day FDR met Ibn Saud’ *The Link*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (April-May, 2005) pp 1-12. Hart, *Saudi Arabia and the United States*, p. 35-37. Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 403-405.

Given that Saudi Arabia's "benevolent neutrality" had been a major factor in binding Britain and the United States closer together in the Kingdom, could this same benevolence be applied to secure their collective interests in the post-war world? The final section of this chapter addresses this issue, which by the end of the war had become an overriding question. Crucially, Ibn Saud and Saudi Arabia had a role to play as the Cold War made headway into the Middle East. On both sides of the Atlantic, a firm belief continued to exist that the combined influence of the US and the UK in Saudi Arabia, and throughout the Middle East, would play a key role in cementing security in the region in the future with regard to containing an expansionist Soviet Union. Hence, from the perspective of both London and Washington, this type of example of strategic interdependence linked Britain and the United States together in Saudi Arabia, which would in turn become a hallmark of the wider post-war international system.

Roosevelt & Churchill's Meeting with Ibn Saud

In the wake of Roosevelt's meeting with Ibn Saud in February 1945, Neville Butler of the British Embassy in Washington wrote to Laurence Grafftey-Smith:

*"The fact that President Roosevelt went out of his way to see Ibn Saud confirms what we have long known, namely that the Americans mean to interest themselves much more in Saudi Arabia than they have in the past; we cannot quarrel with that, provided they show a proper respect for our interests and observe the decencies, and do not try to restrict our legitimate activities in other parts of the world".*⁷²⁷

While Butler took this moment as a stepping stone for greater regional Anglo-American cooperation, that same week, the American minister, William Eddy took away a different meaning from Roosevelt's visit. Nine years later in 1954, Eddy, in his hagiographic monograph *F.D.R. Meets Ibn Saud*, celebrated the Saudi-American union in the most salutary terms: "This moral alliance, this willingness of Islam to face West and bind his fortunes to ours, symbolizes a consummation devoutly to be wished in the world today".⁷²⁸ Eddy has often been cited as the main source of information on how events played out on Great Bitter Lake, but his interpretation

⁷²⁷ PRO: FO 371/45542. Butler to Grafftey-Smith, March 6, 1945.

⁷²⁸ William A. Eddy, *F.D.R. Meets Ibn Saud* (New York, 1954) p. 42.

should be questioned to some extent given the fact that he was the sole translator of the Ibn Saud and Roosevelt conversation.

According to Eddy, the King had rhapsodized to him that President Roosevelt was the “the spirit of benevolence and justice...an example of human perfection in the Twentieth Century”.⁷²⁹ His account of Churchill’s meeting with Ibn Saud on February 17, 1945 in Fayoum could not have been any more different. In a private audience on February 20, 1945, the King apparently told him:

*“The contrast between the President and Mr. Churchill is very great. Mr. Churchill speaks deviously, evades understanding, changes the subject to avoid commitment, forcing me repeatedly to bring him back to the point. The president seeks understanding in conversation his effort is to make the two minds meet; to dispel darkness and shed light upon the issue”.*⁷³⁰

What is most astounding about this missive is not what Ibn Saud apparently claimed, but that Eddy took his words so completely at face value. From the beginning, William Eddy had accused the British of trying “to cap (if not capture) every American move in Saudi Arabia,” and the king’s meeting with the president, was no different. Eddy declined Admiral Sir John Cunningham’s offer to send a cruiser to Jeddah to transport Ibn Saud to the Canal Zone, viewing the British overture as suspicious.⁷³¹ When the King met with Churchill afterwards, Eddy scoffed that “the British persisted in their determination to take over the royal party for a bigger and longer visit than he had made with the President of the United States”.⁷³² The British minister, Laurence Grafftey-Smith meanwhile rejected Eddy’s version of events in full, claiming that the “meeting passed off very well”, and that there had been no “unpleasant debate” between the two men, partly because Churchill allowed Roosevelt to discuss the thorny issue of Palestine.⁷³³

Nevertheless, thanks to Eddy, scholars have felt it necessary to put particular emphasis on Churchill’s alleged poor showing with the King. Other stories have added to Eddy’s assessment.

⁷²⁹ NARA: RG 59/250/38/23/2 Box 7207. Eddy to State Department, February 21, 1945.

⁷³⁰ NARA: RG 59/250/38/23/2 Box 7207. Jeddah to State Department, March 19, 1945.

⁷³¹ NARA: RG 59/250/38/23/2 Box 7207. Minister Tuck to State Department, February 9, 1945. Ibn Saud was transported to the Canal Zone by the American ship, U.S.S. Murphy. The Saudi Arabian delegation on the *U.S.S. Murphy* included not only the entire Saudi Arabian *privy council*, but also an astrologer, an Imam and food taster. Saudi Arabian Guests on the *U.S.S. Murphy*. See NARA: RG 59/250/38/23/2 Box 7207. ‘Guest List on U.S.S. Murphy February 12-14, 1945,’ February 21, 1945.

⁷³² NARA: RG 59/250/38/23/2 Box 7207. Eddy to State Department, February 22, 1945.

⁷³³ SAMEC: Laurence Grafftey Smith Papers. GB165-0123, ‘Alleged Altercation on Palestine Between Churchill and King Ibn Saud’, 1982.

The State Department had organized gifts for Ibn Saud, which have attained semi-legendary status; a DC-10 aircraft and a gold-encrusted wheelchair for the King.⁷³⁴ The Foreign Office, on the other hand, hastily arranged for a Rolls Royce to be presented to Ibn Saud. Although it seemed like an appropriate gift, the car's design unceremoniously forced Ibn Saud to sit on the passenger's side, which dishonoured Saudi Arabian social customs.⁷³⁵

This may all seem like anecdotal evidence, but it has nonetheless given symmetry to an important notion that the United States had overtaken British influence in Saudi Arabia. Generations of Americans, who have found it in their interest to support their "special relationship" with Saudi Arabia continually refer back to the meeting between Roosevelt and Ibn Saud as a cornerstone of that alliance.⁷³⁶ However, it is misleading to describe Roosevelt and Churchill's separate meetings with Ibn Saud as a referendum determining whether American or British influence would subsequently dominate in Saudi Arabia. By doing so, the study of Anglo-American relations once again falls into the trap of being mistakenly observed in isolation, cut off from the wider context of wartime international politics.

To begin with, Roosevelt and Churchill's journey to Great Bitter Lake only occurred because they were returning from the Yalta Conference (February 4-11, 1945), and Ibn Saud was just one of several kings, along with Farouk of Egypt and Haile Selassie of Ethiopia whom they saw during their visit to the region. Secondly, contrary to popular belief, Roosevelt did not reach an agreement with Ibn Saud over access to oil. The ARAMCO Concession was secure, and the subject was barely raised.⁷³⁷ Rather, Roosevelt once again believed that during their conversation he could persuade the Saudi Arabian King to work as an Arab arbiter for a key strategic American objective, namely Arab acquiescence for a Zionist state in Palestine. His attempt failed spectacularly and damaged the president's reputation once he returned to the United States. In a radio address to the American public that spring, Roosevelt said: "I learned more about that whole -Moslem problem by talking with Ibn Saud for five minutes, than I could have learned in

⁷³⁴ Later, in October of 1945, Loy Henderson wrote to Dean Acheson, that the President's "gift" of giving Ibn Saud DC47 for their meeting at Great Bitter Lake in February 1945 had made "the Saudis more air minded", and crucially for the future, it made it more cognizant of the "high quality of American airplanes." See NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Henderson to Acheson, October, 16, 1945.

⁷³⁵ Lippmann, 'The Day FDR Met Ibn Saud', p. 11.

⁷³⁶ To this day, the American embassy in Riyadh proudly displays an enclosed replica of the USS *Quincy* on special occasions. See Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, p. 42.

⁷³⁷ Gardner, *Three Kings*, p. 21.

the exchange of two or three dozen letters”.⁷³⁸ Such a statement made it look like it had been Roosevelt who had been swayed rather than persuading the King. In comparison, Churchill at this juncture held no illusions about the possibility of his changing the mind of Ibn Saud over the Palestine issue. His opposition to the idea had been an integral part of his legitimacy, power and influence within the Moslem world. Instead, the prime minister’s conversations with Ibn Saud were focused on something far more agreeable: Allied appreciation of Saudi Arabia’s “benevolent neutrality.”⁷³⁹

The Power Dynamics of Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1945

Churchill’s meeting with Ibn Saud nonetheless has been used by historians to convey an overriding sense of *fin de siècle* in terms of British power in Saudi Arabia in 1945. Some British officials like Laurence Grafftey-Smith could also see the writing on the wall. Reporting on a meeting between Viceroy Wavell and Ibn Saud, Grafftey-Smith described how the two men waxed nostalgic about the years of close Anglo-Saudi friendship. Later that same day, Ibn Saud asked Grafftey-Smith if it was all possible that His Majesty’s Government could supply a “half a dozen ‘war veteran’ air-craft”. The British minister was pained to tell him that it was unlikely that Britain had the resources to help, but as he told the Foreign Office, he felt that there was “something touching in the King’s hope that we may one day offer some material assistance enabling him to dispense with that so expansively and vigorously”. Poignantly, in the end, Ibn Saud asked Grafftey-Smith if he could get the Americans to help him.⁷⁴⁰

Examples like this exposed a feeling of British insecurity and thus play into the theme that by 1945 their influence was being swallowed up by the dawning of American power. David Reynolds has rightly said that in the wartime alliance, “the United States was clearly the

⁷³⁸ Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harpers Brothers, 1948) pp. 872. Robert Sherwood, Roosevelt’s speech writer wrote that he “never could reconcile” the statement and that the President was “overly impressed” by Ibn Saud. One of Roosevelt’s most trusted advisors, Sam Rosenman, said the remarks “bordered on the ridiculous” and it became remarkably visible that the oratory and eloquence of Roosevelt had been extinguished by the strain of being wartime Commander in Chief. See Sam Rosenman, *Working With Roosevelt* (London: Rupert Hart- Davis, 1952) pp. 480-481.

⁷³⁹ SAMEC: Laurence Grafftey-Smith Papers. GB165-0123, ‘Alleged Altercation on Palestine between Churchill and King Ibn Saud’, 1982.

⁷⁴⁰ In this correspondence, it was noted that Viceroy Wavell assured Ibn Saud that Churchill would win the upcoming British election that summer. See, PRO: FO 371/ 45543. Grafftey-Smith to Anthony Eden, June 13, 1945.

dominant partner by the last year of the war”.⁷⁴¹ However, when scrutinizing Anglo-American relations in the Middle East, it is equally important to note that in the words of the historian Ritchie Ovendale, “in 1945, Britain was the paramount power of the Middle East”.⁷⁴² If one looks more closely at the region, the European countries against which Britain had competed for influence in the 1930s had in various ways been vanquished in the Middle East by 1945.⁷⁴³ In contrast, the network of British military furnishings throughout the region - the Suez Canal Zone, air installations at Lydda, naval ports in Haifa, Bahrain and Aden, the Iraqi air bases in Habanniya and Shaiba, the Arab Legion led by John Glubb, and bases in the Sudan - were proof that Britain’s status as the leading military power in the Middle East was still intact.⁷⁴⁴

Commenting on British supremacy, *The Arab World*, a journal which gave an Arab perspective on world affairs in both Britain and the United States, argued that coming out of the Second World War, the British Government would have a “firmer grip on the Near East and greater prestige than before”.⁷⁴⁵ Because British policy still adhered to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden’s *Mansion House Speech* of 1941, which provided support for some form of Arab union, the establishment of the Arab League in March 1945 did not necessarily insinuate British decline in the Middle East.⁷⁴⁶ “With Arab federalism”, R.M.A. Hankey wrote, Britain “should be able to influence its activities much more than any other Power can”.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴¹ David Reynolds, ‘A ‘Special Relationship’? America, Britain and the International Order Since the Second World War’ *International Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Winter, 1985-1986) p. 4.

⁷⁴² Ritchie Ovendale, *Britain, the United States and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East 1945-1962* (Britain: Leicester University Press, 1996) p. 3.

⁷⁴³ For a study on France in Middle East and Second World War, see Aviel Roshwald, *Estranged Bedfellows: Britain and France in the Middle East during the Second World War* (Britain: Oxford University Press, 2007). For Germany, see Wolfgang Schwanitz, ‘The German Middle Eastern Policy: 1871-1945’ (2004) pp. 11-20. For Italy, see Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and Middle East* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁷⁴⁴ See Elizabeth Monroe, ‘British Interests in the Middle East’ *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April, 1948) pp. 129-146.

⁷⁴⁵ *The Arab World*, Volume 2, Spring Edition, 1945.

⁷⁴⁶ Majid Khaddur, ‘Toward an Arab Union: The League of Arab States’, *The American Political Science Review*, 1945. Eden later recalled in his memoirs, that the “Mansion House” speech was a stab to draw the Arab states away from the yoke of the Axis’s growing influence, in the “*days when Hitler’s friends in every part of the world had cause to be in a buoyant mood.*” See, Eden, *Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning*, p. 241.

⁷⁴⁷ FO 371/45237 Reg. # 209/3/65. Foreign Office Minute, Robin Hankey, March 27, 1945. Some commentators at this time saw the Arab Unity Project purely as a British initiative, “a tool of the British Colonial Office.” See, Bernard D. Weinryb, ‘Arab Unity’ *Commentary Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 5, (March, 1946). On March 22, 1945, Ibn Saud reluctantly agreed to have Saudi Arabia sign the Alexandra Protocol thereby joining the League of Arab States. The Saudi Arabian King had little enthusiasm for the organization, believing that the entire “Arab Unity project” to “*be a waste of time leading to nothing*” and “*would cause dissension and dispute rather than agreement and harmony among the Arab peoples.*” See PRO: FO 371/45237 Reg. # 210/3/65, FO Minute, Robin Hankey, March 27, 1945 & PRO: FO 371/45235. Sir Kinchan Cornwallis to Foreign Office, July 26, 1943.

The British Government's backing for Arab unity also ran concurrently with it identifying itself less with the Zionist cause in Palestine. This change in British attitude was being closely watched by Saudi Arabian officials who were concerned by Washington's increasingly pro-Zionist outlook. Describing the quandary in which the State Department found itself in the region, Gordon Merriam remarked that "they (Saudi Arabian officials) might be cheered up if they knew that our stock is just as low with Zionists".⁷⁴⁸ As William Roger Louis has pointed out, regardless of American excuses, during 1945 Laurence Grafftey-Smith "detected a change in Saudi mood".⁷⁴⁹ London's standing in the Kingdom was on the rise due to the pro-Zionist stance shown by the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, which according to Grafftey-Smith created a great amount of "American unpopularity" amongst everyday Saudi Arabians and had "shaken Ibn Saud considerably".⁷⁵⁰

The sturdiness of Britain's regional influence was also a subject of speculation for American officials in relation to what would happen after Ibn Saud's reign had come to a close. Writing in 1945, Harold Hoskins noted that despite his age and infirmities, "the King continues to run all affairs himself," uncomfortable with delegating important decisions to his successor sons.⁷⁵¹ Because Ibn Saud's leading sons – Saud, Faisal and Mansour - were considered to be rivals, both American and British officials had little confidence that an orderly transition of power in Saudi Arabia would occur following Ibn Saud's death. Rumours had been swirling holding that if Ibn Saud died, and Saudi Arabia was thrown into chaos, Iraq would enter the kingdom to commandeer the oil-rich Hasa Coast.⁷⁵² Stories like this made the State Department nervous. Prior to serving as the American minister to Iraq, the new director of NEA, Loy Henderson, noticed firsthand the way in which Britain had adeptly used its network of diplomats to modify and moderate the policies of the Iraqi Government.⁷⁵³ Given the fact that it was the NEA's job, said Henderson, to "see to it that order prevailed in Saudi Arabia, and that Ibn Saud

⁷⁴⁸ NARA RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954 Box #15. Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs. Merriam to Rayner, December, 5, 1945.

⁷⁴⁹ Louis, *British Empire and the Middle East*, p. 194.

⁷⁵⁰ PRO: FO 371/45543. Grafftey-Smith to Foreign Office, November 30, 1945.

⁷⁵¹ NARA: RG 59-250-38-23-2 Box 7207. Hoskins to Henderson, July 22, 1945.

⁷⁵² NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs 1941-1954, NEA Memorandum of Conversation between Nuri Pasha and Marcel Wagner, President of the American Eastern Corporation, June 11, 1945.

⁷⁵³ Brands, *Inside the Cold War: Loy Henderson and the Rise of American Empire*, pp. 116-118.

remained firmly on his throne”, the State Department had a vested interest in British suzerainty keeping the Kingdom’s neighbours at bay.⁷⁵⁴

With London’s influence in Saudi Arabia still a force to be reckoned with in 1945, it sometimes seemed prohibitive to accommodate both British and American aspirations for power in the Kingdom. This jostling for hegemonic position came into play when Ibn Saud finally declared war on the Axis powers on February 28, 1945. Saudi Arabia’s neutrality in the strictest definition of the word was no longer a strategic objective in itself for Ibn Saud or for that matter for British and American policymakers. At this stage in the war, Ibn Saud’s decision to declare war could no longer be used by Axis propagandists or his Arab rivals to deny the legitimacy of Saudi Arabia’s independence. Declaring war against the Axis was now deemed a rite of passage for joining the United Nations and the new liberal post-war international order.⁷⁵⁵

Occurring only a week after the Roosevelt-Ibn Saud meeting, the United States was caught completely off guard by Saudi Arabia’s declaration of war. Embarrassed, Wallace Murray sent a diplomatic demarche directly to Lord Halifax, asking why the United States was not informed by British officials. Murray also added that this injustice undermined the consultation framework set up by the Stettinius Mission of 1944, which the State Department still believed held “great importance”. The British Ambassador was alarmed by Murray’s complaint. He sent an urgent message reprimanding Laurence Grafftey-Smith for not informing the American legation of Saudi Arabia’s declaration of war.⁷⁵⁶

However, for the Foreign Office - naturally defending one of their own - Wallace Murray’s complaints were completely unwarranted, and his reaction had shown that he had “gone a bit off the rails”.⁷⁵⁷ Firstly, British officials in Jeddah were not responsible for “Ibn Saud on the question of his declaration of war”.⁷⁵⁸ From its perspective, the agreements that had emanated from the Stettinius Mission had been committed to the “fullest possible consultation between British and American officials in the Middle East, with a view to settling complaints

⁷⁵⁴ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954- ‘Memorandum of Conversation’ Judge Fred. M. Vinson, Director, Office of War Mobilisation Ralph A Brad, Under Secretary of the Navy Mr. John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War Mr. Merriam, Mr. Parker, June 22, 1945.

⁷⁵⁵ At this time, Saudi Arabia declared war against the Axis along with its regional neighbours Turkey, Egypt Lebanon and Syria. See, Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*, pp. 180-184.

⁷⁵⁶ PRO: FO 371 45542. ‘Saudi Arabian Declaration of War Controversy’ Halifax to Foreign Office, March 1945.

⁷⁵⁷ PRO: FO 371 45542. Foreign Office Minute, March 7, 1945.

⁷⁵⁸ PRO: FO 371 45542. Hankey to Wright, March 7, 1945.

and grievances locally at the lowest possible level”. Up to this point, said RMA Hankey “it’s clear that the arrangement is working pretty well...”⁷⁵⁹ But rather than protesting directly to Grafftey-Smith, the American legation in Jeddah complained directly to Lord Halifax in Washington which was not in “accordance with the procedure agreed upon for the ventilation of complaints”.⁷⁶⁰

In any case, the Americans did not have to be consulted on every minor concern in Saudi Arabia. Though British foreign policy sought American support, and British officials in Jeddah were instructed to do “everything they can to avoid any appearance of Anglo-American rivalry”, they were nonetheless told by the Foreign Office that “this should not be interpreted in too restrictive a sense”.⁷⁶¹ Other local Arab leaders that Britain relied upon such as Emir Abdullah of Transjordan lacked independent credentials making him a limited ally in the Arab world. Meanwhile in Egypt, King Farouk’s “vagaries...were becoming altogether too much,” said Lord Killearn and he could no longer to be trusted.⁷⁶² Given this unreliable company, Ibn Saud was still looked upon as an essential part of British foreign policy by London and too much of a key player to just sit back and let American officials completely take him over. On that score, it is worth pointing out that bowing to American pressure was not the only means to ensuring the long term aim of Anglo-American cooperation. Like other issues that had divided Britain and the United States, what this controversy had shown is that it had grown - not from a fundamental disagreement over Saudi Arabia’s declaration of war- but rather from a breakdown in Anglo-American liaison.

In a matter that was distinct, yet ultimately linked to bilateral communication, on April 7, 1945, the Foreign Office received reports that Colonel Eddy was “scheming” to convince Amir Faisal that his trip to San Francisco for the United Nations inauguration was purely a United States function, when it had really been organized jointly by both American and British officials. The Foreign Office advised Grafftey-Smith not to worry about Eddy’s chicanery. The irony was

⁷⁵⁹ PRO: FO 371 45542. Hankey to Wright, March 7, 1945.

⁷⁶⁰ PRO: FO 371 45542. Hankey to Wright, March 7, 1945.

⁷⁶¹ PRO: FO 954/15D. Baxter to Wright, April 3, 1945.

⁷⁶² PRO: FO 141/952. Lord Killearn to Foreign Office. August 5, 1944. British hesitance towards King Farouk may have been bolstered by the fact that the King openly courted American officers rather than British. Lord Killearn opined that this set of circumstances was attributed to how Farouk felt “*less of inferiority complex with American than with Englishman*”. See, PRO: FO 141/952. Killearn to Foreign Office, June 22, 1944. In a report compiled by Chatham House in March 1945, it was said that a major strike against Emir Abdullah of Transjordan was due to the “*unfortunate fact that the majority of Arabs do not regard him with favour.*” See, PRO: FO 371 45237. Elphison to Baxter, March 6, 1945.

that “the Arab is truly democratic and cares little for protocol, and the American efforts to impress usually miss the mark”. Indeed the Foreign Office retold an amusing story from 1943 when the first Lend-Lease riyls arrived and were carried by American Marines with Tommy guns and “all of Jidda laughed”.⁷⁶³

Nevertheless, British officials regarded the lack of communication as somewhat ominous, and the fact that the United States demanded to host the Saudi delegation during its stay in San Francisco made it appear that furthering Anglo-American cooperation was not necessarily its top priority. Certainly in some respects, the United States in its handling of Saudi Arabia joining the newly established United Nations comes across as retaliatory in nature. Just as Grafftey-Smith had not notified the American legation of Riyadh’s declaration of war, Eddy kept the British Embassy in the dark about his discussions with Saudi Arabian officials over joining the United Nations.⁷⁶⁴

Another area where British officials feared they may be losing influence was with Saudi Arabia’s neighbours in the Persian Gulf, the Trucial States.⁷⁶⁵ This collection of sheikdoms had been tied to the British Government by treaty and had dealt with Indian Civil Service’s (ICS) political agents for over a century. Their geographic location and proximity to the Indian Ocean, Basra, Iran and India were critical pieces to London’s hegemony in that part of the world. Given its importance, one Foreign Office official at the time observed that if “floods of American money” poured into Saudi Arabia; what kind of impact would that have on the adjacent Trucial States?⁷⁶⁶

Conversely, Washington had its own misgivings over this aspect of their association with the British in Saudi Arabia. In 1944, Loy Henderson authored a lengthy report, which he delivered to the Secretary of State, outlining the “British desire to restrict American activities in the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms”.⁷⁶⁷ Rather than actively seeking to thwart American interests, what truly troubled Henderson was that the British Government was effective at blurring the line

⁷⁶³ PRO: FO 371 45543. Foreign Office to Grafftey-Smith, April 7, 1945.

⁷⁶⁴ PRO: FO 954/15D. C.W. Baxter to Wright, April 3, 1945.

⁷⁶⁵ For this study, the Trucial States represents a wide area of British suzerainty in the Persian Gulf. Along with Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm-al Quawain, Dibba, Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah, and Kalba, it also includes Qatar, Bahrain and Bushire.

⁷⁶⁶ PRO: FO 921/192. Foreign Office Minute by Hamilton, September 12, 1944.

⁷⁶⁷ Library of Congress (LC): Loy Henderson Papers, Container 12, ‘British Efforts to Retain the Position of Great Britain as the Sole Great Power with Important Interests in the Persian Gulf’, March, 1944.

between outright formal control and informal influence in the Persian Gulf.⁷⁶⁸ Therefore, undetermined frontiers between Saudi Arabia and the smaller sheikdoms of the Trucial Coast made it a potential arena for future discord. Like Henderson, Grafftey-Smith also highlighted the problem, but he saw things differently, warning his British colleagues that in this no-man zone “oil is suspected to exist, possibly in large quantities”, which one day could cause trouble to both Saudi Arabia and the United States.⁷⁶⁹ Grafftey-Smith’s prediction partly materialized in the 1950s with the Buraimi Oasis dispute when Britain, bound by treaty, defended the Trucial States against Saudi Arabia and the commercial interests of ARAMCO which was tacitly backed by the United States Government.⁷⁷⁰

While there seemed to be some tension building between British officials in the Trucial Coast and American officials in Saudi Arabia, it was not the only quarrel bubbling under the surface. Within the corridors of British policymaking, the Trucial Coast was an area in which the Government of India, whose political agents had been responsible for British interests there for decades, sparred with members of the Foreign Office, who took a softer line towards Ibn Saud and the Americans.⁷⁷¹ The US consulate in Dhahran led by Parker Hart was disappointed, but understood, why there seemed to be some obstructionism on the part of British political agents in this area, and thus sought out friendlier channels. For questions related to the Trucial Coast, American officials involved in Saudi Arabia preferred to deal directly with the Foreign Office.⁷⁷²

Simon Davis cites the Political Agent of Bahrain, Thomas Hickinbotham as a British representative whose imperious attitude towards Hart had helped raise Anglo-American tensions over the Trucial Coast issue. Yet, at the same time, Hart was quite aware that the Government of

⁷⁶⁸ An OSS report assessed British treaty relations in the Arabian Peninsula at the time and contended that in the post-war years, relationships with these sheikdoms would be predicated largely on determining the status of the of the area in relation to the British Government. See, NARA: RG 250 49-32 05 Entry 1435 Record of Office of Near Eastern Affairs Box 2 Lot File 78D 440, OSS Report, ‘The British Treaty Position in the Arabian Peninsula’, February 4, 1944.

⁷⁶⁹ IOR: R/15/1/700. Bahrain to Prior, Political Resident, Bushire, August 8, 1944 & FO 371/45543. Foreign Office Memorandum, ‘Anglo American Relations in Saudi Arabia’ December 1, 1945. It is worth recalling that the British Government and the Al-Saud had quarreled on and off about border disputes dating back as far as 1800. See, J.B. Kelly, ‘The Buraimi Oasis Dispute’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1956) p.319.

⁷⁷⁰ FRUS: *The Near and Middle East 1952-1954*, Vol. IX (United States: Government Printing Office, 1986) pp. 2576-2577 & Donald Hawley, *The Trucial States*, pp. 186-193. For a study on post-war Anglo-American dynamic in the Trucial Coast, see Simon Smith, *Britain’s Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Qatar and the Trucial States, 1950-1971* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004) pp. 109-129.

⁷⁷¹ For a primary source that best explains the tensions between the Government of India and London in relation to the Trucial Coast, Saudi Arabia and the United States, see IOR: R/15/1/700. Hickinbotham to Prior, June 20, 1944. For a brief secondary source account, see, Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 222.

⁷⁷² IOR: R/15/2/538. ‘Report Briefly on American Penetration in the Bahrain and Trucial Coast Areas’ Hickinbotham to Prior, March 1, 1945.

India saw this territory as its own personal sphere of influence and equally resented outside interference, whether it be it from Washington or London. Writing to his colleagues in Jeddah, Hart would later claim that Hickinbotham was an “exceptionally well-informed and able man”, who was by no means anti-American, but whose judgment was sometimes clouded by the fact that he was “intensely jealous of his authority”.⁷⁷³ By the spring of 1945, relations between the two sides would improve further after Hickinbotham was succeeded by C.G. Pelly, who contended that his predecessor’s middle name was “Pomposity”. Pelly got along well with Hart and was praised by US officials for having “predilections...toward friendliness and cooperation towards Americans”. Another crucial aspect to take note of with regard to Pelly was that he found the Soviet Union to be “nothing but trouble”, a message which by the end of the Second World War would add a new meaning to the Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷⁴

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia and the Emerging Cold War

By the end of the Second World War, the spectre of the Soviet Union becoming more involved with Saudi Arabia loomed large. Since 1941, the British and American war effort had “indirectly” built up Moscow’s contacts in the Arabian Peninsula. By 1944, 28.8 percent of all cargo shipped from the Western Hemisphere to the Soviet Union was transported through the Persian Gulf.⁷⁷⁵ But when it came to the Foreign Office and the State Department, it was the former that viewed this fact about the Soviet’s possible influence in the region with a more analytical, and wary eye.⁷⁷⁶ Rejecting the hopeful optimism that marked aspects of the Roosevelt Administration’s policy towards Moscow, London instinctively relied on lessons learned from the “Great Game”, the geo-strategic battle waged by Britain and Russia on the northwest frontier of Central Asia for over a century.⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷³ NARA: RG 84 350/67/22/1 Entry 3153. ‘The Political Agent at Bahrein, Major Thomas Hickinbotham C.I.E.’, Hart to the legations of Jeddah, Cairo and Embassy in Tehran, November 18, 1944.

⁷⁷⁴ NARA: RG 84 350/67/22/1 Entry 3153. Vice Consul William Sands to Gordon Merriam, July 15, 1945.

⁷⁷⁵ LL: Tim Mulligan Papers. Bernard Reich, ‘The Persian Gulf’, *Research Analysis Corp Prepared for the US Army* (June, 1971).

⁷⁷⁶ Taking a different view of things, the historian Martin Folly claims that the Foreign Office was cautiously optimistic that Britain and the Soviet Union shared enough interests that cooperation was thought to be feasible. See, Martin H. Foley, *Churchill, Whitehall, and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London, 2000).

⁷⁷⁷ For works relating to the “Great Game”, see K. Meyer & S. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Game and the Race for Empire in Asia* (Britain: Abacas, 1999). Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 2006). Kathleen Burk ‘Imperial Rivalry with the Russian Empire’, Lecture given at Gresham College, November 28, 2005.

To counter a post-war Soviet threat, Britain was ready to continue its old strategy of supporting buffer states like Saudi Arabia to impede Russian expansion. London hoped that this paradigm would be strengthened by a growing US presence in the Kingdom, which would do double duty, by also protecting British interests along the way. Back in September 1944, Lord Moyne and his Chief of Staff, William Croft, had both concurred that there was strategic value in an American presence, believing Britain's position would be "reinforced" in the event of a Soviet threat.⁷⁷⁸ In London, the Foreign Office also acknowledged that it would be a "considerable advantage" if the United States became more entrenched in the affairs of Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷⁹ Moreover, if another European war materialized (i.e. against the Soviet Union), the United States would therefore "directly or indirectly" protect British interests in the region.⁷⁸⁰

As it happened, Britain's fixation on the Soviet Union also coincided with Ibn Saud's own worldview. Once, for a brief period in the interwar years, Saudi Arabia - home of Islamic Holy Places - and the atheist Soviet Union had favourable relations, even though they were the most unlikely of bedfellows. The Soviet Union had been the first country to recognize the new "Hedjaz- Nejd" state and in one of history's great ironies, Moscow had sent Saudi Arabia, the land of the Two Holy Mosques, 42,000 cases of Russian kerosene oil in 1932.⁷⁸¹ However, this peculiar friendship had dramatically come to an end by the time of the Second World War. As early as January 31, 1940, Ibn Saud proposed a "confederation of Arab countries under the aegis of Great Britain" that he believed would act as a bulwark against Russian penetration of the Middle East.⁷⁸²

In the run up to Churchill's meeting with Ibn Saud in February 1945, London's apprehension over the Soviet Union had grown in the wake of Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov's

⁷⁷⁸ PRO: FO 921/192. William Croft referring to Stanley Jordan's report, Cairo to London, September 27, 1944. On an equal level, the Soviet Union had been eyeing London's actions in the Middle East during this time as well, viewing the Arab League, which in its view, said a State Department report was a "British tool directed against the USSR." NARA: RG 250 49-32 05 Entry 1435 Record of Office of Near Eastern Affairs Box 2 Lot File 78D 440. Office of Coordination Liaison and Intelligence, 'Background, Development and Prospects of the Arab League to Mid-1946' July 1, 1946.

⁷⁷⁹ PRO: FO/921/ 192. Jordan to Foreign Office, September 6, 1944.

⁷⁸⁰ PRO: FO/921/ 192. Jordan to Foreign Office, September 6, 1944.

⁷⁸¹ Later that same year, Amir Faisal, Ibn Saud's most trusted son went on an unprecedented visit to Moscow in an effort to "strengthen and deepen the friendly relations between the peoples of the USSR and Arabia." *Moscow Daily News* 'Emir Faisal Received by Molotov', June 2, 1932. See, Georgetown University, Laninger Library (LL): Tim Mulligan Papers Box 6 Folder 11. & BL:IOR R/15/2/295 Intelligence report Jedda, Charge d' Affaires to Secretary of State at Foreign Office, October 1, 1932.

⁷⁸² PRO: AIR 2/5047 R.W. Chappell, Group Captain, January 1, 1940. The King's plan was shelved by British officials, but would eventually materialize in the 1950's under the name of the Baghdad Pact.

appeal at Yalta for trusteeship of the Italian Middle Eastern colony of Tripolitania.⁷⁸³ When the two men finally had a chance to speak face-to-face in Fayoum, the King spoke of Soviet power in terms of allegory, a type of dialogue that he often used with both British and American officials throughout the war. In the King's mind, the Soviet Union was a serpent who had used a man (Britain and the United States) for protection against the wolf (Nazi Germany). Once the wolf was driven off, the serpent would attack the man.⁷⁸⁴ Churchill, playing the unfamiliar role of conciliatory diplomat, tried to allay the King's misgivings. But it must have been reassuring to know that the level of suspicion that Ibn Saud held for Moscow matched his own anti-communist sympathies. Ibn Saud's cryptic parable put into focus his view of the dangers of the Soviet Union and helped to justify to London the acceptance of the United States taking a firmer role in Saudi Arabia.

As a longtime gatekeeper of British interests in this part of the world, the Government of India also envisioned the possibility of a Soviet challenge in the near future and looked to the power of the United States. In the beginning of 1945, its External Affairs Department informed the British War Cabinet that a strategic priority of Britain should be "to ensure that no single potentially hostile power secures predominance" in the Arab countries, making special note of Saudi Arabia. What was therefore needed was "a steadfast understanding with the USA", which would be "the best chance of preserving the living force of the Commonwealth in this region".⁷⁸⁵

Thus the "Great Game" was alive and well and London had no plans to discourage the United States from stepping up to the front lines in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁸⁶ In this respect the underlying objective to use the United States for protection of Britain's interests in Saudi Arabia invokes the classic Anglo-American relations analogy. This analogy - put forth by Harold Macmillan to Richard Crossman- proposed that Britain's mentoring of the United States was similar to that of the Greeks to the Romans.⁷⁸⁷ During the Second World War and thereafter, Britain with all its accumulated wisdom would harness the inexperience and might of America to protect its own

⁷⁸³ Gardner, *Three Kings*, p. 51-54.

⁷⁸⁴ PRO: FO 371/45542. Foreign Office Minute, February 9, 1945.

⁷⁸⁵ BL: IOR MSSEUR F 138 /71. Memorandum prepared by the External Affairs Department, Government of India, Sir Olaf Caroe to Gilbert Laithwaite, War Cabinet Secretariat, January 1, 1945.

⁷⁸⁶ For a contrasting view to this outlook, in 1942, a special report on British public opinion concluded that "*the gratitude and admiration for the great fight of the Russians far exceeds the feeling for any other foreign country*". See P.M.H. Bell's *John Bull and the Bear* (Britain, 1991).

⁷⁸⁷ A. Sampson, *Macmillan: A Study in Ambiguity*, (United States: Simon and Schuster, 1967) p 60.

national objectives. An internal Foreign Office paper from March 1944 fully elaborated these plans: “The transmutation of their (The Americans) power into useful forms, and its direction in advantageous channels, is our concern,” serving as a perfect illustration of how British officials were influenced by this “Greek” way of thinking.⁷⁸⁸

Yet, the Cold War creed that the Soviet Union was a direct menace to the United States had by no means permeated all aspects of American policy-making, and thus it was unclear that Washington would become a willing participant in their ally’s new “Great Game”. Some American officials like William Eddy applauded the fact that President Truman had refused to see Churchill before the Potsdam Conference (July 16 to August 2, 1945), stating that “for too long it has looked as though the US were always backing Britain up to counterbalance Russia...let’s keep ourselves off their apron strings”.⁷⁸⁹ On his return from a highly publicized trip to Saudi Arabia in 1945, Senator Claude Pepper, who clearly sat in the Henry Wallace foreign policy camp of being pro-Moscow and anti-London, wrote in his pamphlet on ‘Big Three Unity and American-Soviet Friendship’: “exhausted and financially pressed as she is, Britain still keeps huge armies on alert, constantly building more. She holds to her corner of the atomic bomb like Grim Death, backing America’s stand on secrecy with a determination born of panic”.⁷⁹⁰

While it is true that the United States approach in Saudi Arabia lacked Britain’s sense of urgency to contain the Soviet Union, the aforementioned views of Eddy and especially Pepper’s were considered to be extreme amongst most American policymakers at the time. Adolf Berle largely spoke for the majority when examining if the United States should seek to strengthen the Anglo-American alliance or befriend the Russians:

*“When and if there ceases to be a reasonable hope, the danger of arousing Russian suspicions will be part of the price we will have to pay for the policy of closer friendship with Britain. In view of the United Kingdom’s geographical location as an outpost of security for us, to say nothing of less ponderable (sic) reasons it is not too great a price to pay”.*⁷⁹¹

Adding to the notion that the United States and Britain were interdependent in Saudi Arabia was the fact that Washington could no longer ignore the growing evidence that suggested

⁷⁸⁸ PRO: FO 371/38523. ‘The Essential of an American Policy’, March 21, 1944.

⁷⁸⁹ SML: William Eddy Papers. Box 6, Correspondence, July 23, 1945.

⁷⁹⁰ LSE: CHAT C2/222. ‘An American Policy for Peace: A Program for ‘Big Three Unity and American-Soviet Friendship’, Pamphlet written by Claude Pepper, 1946.

⁷⁹¹ NARA: RG 59 250/34/13/4 Box 5809. Missive by Adolf Berle, April 20, 1944.

that the Soviets had expansionist ambitions. Since the beginning of 1943, the State Department was carefully watching the virtual subjugation of the USSR's occupation of Northern Iran, a presence which seemed to have no limit.⁷⁹² Commenting on the Soviet Union's aim of acquiring a warm water port, an intelligence report on January 1945 from a U.S. Naval Observer in Basra remarked: "The question repeatedly asked in this area is "When will Russia move out of North Persia? ...a more apt question would be "When will Russia move in South Persia".⁷⁹³

As the historian Henry Butterfield Ryan has remarked, as the year of 1945 progressed, Washington willingly allowed their British counterparts "to launch a trial balloon for a firmer policy towards the USSR".⁷⁹⁴ In this emerging Cold War context, A.B. Calder, the former first secretary to the American Embassy in Moscow who now working at the American Embassy in Cairo, used his own experience to warn his fellow colleagues at the State Department of Soviet designs in the Middle East. Writing a memorandum on the political situation two days before the Potsdam Conference, Calder emphasized that to combat Soviet intrusion, it was important to:

*"explore at once the possibilities for a collaborative effort with the British in the Middle East in feasible ways for improving the economy of the region without impairing British chances for recovery and future prosperity and in ways mutually beneficial to the British, the countries concerned and ourselves".*⁷⁹⁵

Like other American officials, such as Harold Hoskins and Herbert Feis before him, Calder believed that United States Government did not possess the experience or diplomatic infrastructure to turn the region into some sort of an American protectorate. At this critical juncture, it was essential that the United States alongside Britain would "assume protective

⁷⁹² Soviet authorities in this area had demobilized Iranian military forces and encouraged Kurdish separatism, which was a bane for the Iranian Government in Iran. See, NARA: RG 38-37-14-13-3 Document 1549, Box 6. 'American Policy in Iran', Report by Jernegan, January 23, 1943. For greater regional context, Britain and the Soviet Union were also continuing the "Great Game" in Afghanistan at this time in connection to Russo-Afghan frontier disputes. See, LL: Van H. Engert Papers, Box 9, Folder 10. 'British Policy re-Russo-Afghan Frontier Disputes', Van H. Engert to Hull, December 26, 1944. For works on Russian ambitions in Iran via the "the Great Game", see, Elena Andreeva, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (London: Routledge Press, 2007).

⁷⁹³ NARA: RG 38/370/14/13/3 Box 5. Intelligence Division, 'Top Secret Reports of Naval Attaches' Intelligence Report by U.S. Naval Observer in Basra, C.E. Perry, January 15, 1945.

⁷⁹⁴ Henry Butterfield Ryan, *The Vision of Anglo-Alliance: The US-UK Alliance and the Emerging Cold War, 1943-1946* (Britain: Cambridge, 1987) p.171.

⁷⁹⁵ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941-1954. Memorandum prepared by A. Bland Calder, American Embassy in Moscow, July 14, 1945.

functions” and protect their interests in Arab countries like Saudi Arabia jointly as a unit to keep them from falling into “hostile hands”.⁷⁹⁶

Scholars have attempted to explain the Soviet dimension in Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. Barry Rubin asserts that although it was true that London “was glad to see the Americans with a substantial stake in the Middle East”, he lays greater emphasis on the Saudis trying to “leverage” the threat of Russia “in order to obtain US aid and support for themselves”.⁷⁹⁷ Simon Davis is one example of a historian going overboard by exaggerating that by the end of the Second World War American officials in Saudi Arabia were “equating Britain in many ways with the USSR”.⁷⁹⁸ Overall, the historiography of the subject has not substantially delved into the possibility of Soviet expansion acting as a binding agent, leading the United States and Britain to find common ground against a shared enemy in the Kingdom.⁷⁹⁹ In many respects, the pattern that had begun to surface in Saudi Arabia would serve as a prescient template to the early Cold War era during which the Soviet threat served as a catalyst for Anglo-American interdependence.⁸⁰⁰

Above all, it was this kind of thinking that led the State Department to reiterate as late as November 20, 1945 that even in the face of obstacles, Anglo-American cooperation remained enduringly valuable. A rejoinder to those that thought the “Special Relationship” was euphemistic, a report entitled “Revision of Policy Manual-Saudi Arabia” recommended that it was in the US’s interest to:

“not to seek a preferred position in Saudi Arabia, but to consult with the British Government in connection with important moves which this Government may make in that country, in the belief that the United States and Great Britain have a

⁷⁹⁶ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 403 Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. Memorandum prepared by A. Bland Calder, member of American Embassy in Moscow, July 14, 1945.

⁷⁹⁷ Rubin, *Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia*, p. 265.

⁷⁹⁸ Davis, *Contested Space*, p. 195.

⁷⁹⁹ Although one of Wm. Roger Louis’ main contentions in his work the *British Empire and the Middle East* is that Britain looked to the Americans for assistance against Soviet expansion in the region, he makes the mistake of not relating this point in his section on Saudi Arabia. Focusing on the United States’ search for security in Saudi Arabia, Aaron David Miller’s main comments on the Soviet role apply only to the post-war years. See, Miller, *Search for Security*, pp. 173-179. Another historian, who has looked at the geo-strategic dynamic of Saudi Arabian oil at this time, Helmut Mejcher also makes no mention of the Soviet Issue. See, Mejcher, ‘Saudi Arabia’s vital link to the West’, *Middle Eastern Studies*.

⁸⁰⁰ See, Ryan, *The Vision of Anglo-America*, pp. 170-173. Peter Weiler ‘Britain and the First Cold War: Revisionist Beginnings’ *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1998) pp. 127-138. John Kent, *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War: 1944-1949* (Britain: Leicester University Press, 1993).

common interest in securing prosperity and political stability in Saudi Arabia, and in working in harmony to that end."⁸⁰¹

Conclusion

The power dynamics of Anglo-American relations at the end of the Second World War have been drawn in such a way that the historian Alex Danchev has characterized them to a weigh-in between a "poor little English donkey" and a "great American buffalo".⁸⁰² Many historical accounts, though, have tended to apply this broader portrait of the wartime alliance directly to the wider circumstances of the relationship between Britain and the United States in the Kingdom, which makes for an inaccurate depiction. As this chapter has shown, having cleared away some of the hyperbole of the famed Roosevelt-Ibn Saud meeting in February 1945, the rise of the United States as the premier foreign power in the Kingdom's affairs, and the concurrent decline of Britain were by no means pre-ordained.

By 1945, officials on both sides of the Atlantic engaged in Saudi Arabia would concede that the earlier high expectations held for a close Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia had not been fully achieved. During the ensuing year, there were complex issues which tested the two allies, namely the question as to whether Britain's long-standing quasi-colonial influence in the Trucial Coast was compatible with the United States' largesse-based policies in Saudi Arabia. There were also other examples where the two sides fell out over such issues as Saudi Arabia declaring war on the Axis and joining the United Nations, but these specific grievances were mainly the result of poor communication between allies rather than actual schisms in policy. Despite the tensions present in the bilateral relationship, when observing Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia in 1945, one sees the two allies still committed to the idea of collaboration.

Looking toward the post-war international scene, what this chapter has shown is that the underlying rationale behind the Kingdom's "benevolent neutrality" still applied in the post-war world as Ibn Saud and his kingdom mattered in terms of wider geostrategic considerations. By the latter half of 1945, the State Department was generally comfortable with British agency in

⁸⁰¹ NARA: RG 59 Lot File No. 54 D 40, Records of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-1941 1954. NEA Memorandum, 'Revision of Policy Manual-Saudi Arabia', November 20, 1945.

⁸⁰² Alex Danchev, *The Indirect Strategy, Allies at War*, (eds.) D. Reynolds, W. Kimball, and A. O. Chubarian (Britain, 1994) p. 21.

the Middle East, as this provided an extra layer of protection for US interests in Saudi Arabia. Equally, from the vantage point of British strategic thinking, by adapting to the United States' greater involvement with Ibn Saud, one could head off any Soviet schemes aimed at breaking up Britain's informal empire in the Middle East.

Conclusion

Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia: A Study of a Trying Relationship

During the Second World War, Britain and the United States fought together as allies in a global struggle against “enemies so evil”, as one writer put it, that “they seemed to be outlandish characters of cruelty”.⁸⁰³ Regardless of this fact, there is a general inclination to believe that in Saudi Arabia, the two world powers were prone to be rivals. This distorts the true nature of the relationship between them. Robert Musil, the novelist of *The Man Without Qualities*, once observed:

*“Place a greyhound beside a pug, willow beside a poplar, a glass of wine on a freshly plowed field, a portrait in a sailboat instead of in an art gallery - in short, place side by side two highbred and distinct forms of life, and a void will come into being between them, they will cancel each other out, with the effect of a quite malicious, bottomless absurdity”.*⁸⁰⁴

In the same vein, the recent historiography of the Anglo-American wartime alliance has in many respects epitomized Musil’s line of thinking, tending to be either pre-occupied with or misinterpreting the forces of polarization. The documents from the US and UK national archives, which were made available from the 1970s onwards, tended to show officials invariably framing their actions in the lexicon of often diverging “national interests”. This led historians to develop interpretations of the relationship in which the theme of cooperation took second place to that of competition. Scholars like David Reynolds argued that the wartime alliance was built - not upon the evangelical Churchillian themes of cultural, historical and ideological unity- but rather on a nexus characterized by the much less heroic and more complex idea of “competitive cooperation”. The idea of high-minded cooperation was replaced by the realities of practical bargaining, and the partnership that saved the West became an alliance of a kind. The accentuation of rivalry and discord in the subsequent historiography has ironically contributed to

⁸⁰³ Nicholas Dawidoff, *The Fly Swatter: Portrait of an Exceptional Character* (New York: Random House, 2002) p.131.

⁸⁰⁴ Robert Musil, *A Man Without Qualities* (Britain: Picador, 1995) p. 210.

a new form of evangelism; the belief that Anglo-American relations were nothing more than a byword for antagonism and narrow rivalry. This is, however, an incomplete portrayal of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War.

In analysing Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia between 1941 and 1945 this thesis has emphasized the forces which shaped the alliance. During this period, it must be acknowledged that Britain and the United States' actions in the Kingdom to some degree were an adversarial affair. Nonetheless, this thesis offers a new interpretation of the subject arguing that the unique value attributed by both powers to Saudi Arabia's regional influence encouraged a continuous search for a lasting Anglo-American partnership in the Kingdom. Their association can best be described as founded on the concept of strategic interdependence.

Prior to 1941, British and American influence in the Kingdom mostly took a discrete form. Britain, the greatest regional power in the interwar years, had been far more heavily involved in Saudi Arabia than the United States. London's relations with Saudi Arabia had helped to secure the country's independence, while its king, Ibn Saud, was an important ally within the *Pax Britannica* system in the Middle East. In contrast, the official contact that Washington had had with the Saudi Arabian King was largely insignificant. What fostered early relations between the two countries and made American influence relevant in Saudi Arabia were the philanthropic endeavours of individual Americans as well as the operations of private commercial enterprises. However, in the lead-up to the Second World War, British and American interests in the Kingdom drew closer together in an effort to block Axis influence from penetrating the Middle East.

For more than forty-years, while Ibn Saud forged the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in an area notorious for its irredentism, the King was regarded by officials and policymakers in London and Washington as a pillar of regional stability. This thesis sets itself apart from other studies in the emphasis that it places on the wider international influence attributed to Ibn Saud by the Allies. As such, it highlights the fact that Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia had ramifications which spread out well beyond the Kingdom's borders. Once war broke out, the US and Britain were keenly aware of the geographic centrality of Ibn Saud's kingdom, which connected the Mediterranean and Pacific theatres of war and also served as a potential Allied supply route to the Soviet Union from June 1941 onwards. As the "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques", Ibn Saud was also valued as an influential religious figure. In the Allied-Axis propaganda war being

waged in the Middle East, he could help sway Arab and Moslem populations to back the Allied cause. Within an international system, which was growing increasingly anti-imperialistic, the King's political credibility was further enhanced by the fact that his country was an outlier in the Arab world; a sovereign nation which was not under colonial rule. As the American official Parker Hart noted, "in Arabia, Ibn Saud and the law of the Koran are unchallenged, except by the vast distances and the careless independence of the desert".⁸⁰⁵

During the Second World War, one of the ways in which the Saudi Arabian king exhibited his independence was through his country's position of neutrality, interpreted by British and American officials to be a form of "benevolent neutrality". Historically, neutrality has been deemed an "antisocial policy", but as Efraim Karsh notes, in the realm of twentieth century international politics it had been transformed "into a dynamic, enterprising policy".⁸⁰⁶ While the American envoy, Wendell Willkie, would claim that Nuri Said's early declaration of war against the Axis had "assured Iraqi leadership in the Arab World, British and American officials involved in Saudi Arabian affairs viewed things differently. On both sides of the Atlantic, officials knew that Ibn Saud would be better utilized by the Allied cause if he remained officially neutral. The greater the perception that he was not under the thumb of Britain or the United States made the Saudi Arabian king a more credible ally. Access to the favourable influence of a sovereign Arab ruler like Ibn Saud meant that British and American officials would have more room for political manoeuvring in terms of dealing with such regional issues as the deadlock in Palestine. It also meant that respecting Saudi Arabia's autonomy was a useful propaganda tool in the war of public opinion. It was a first-rate example of the glaring difference between the Allied commitment to self-determination and the Axis' promise of coerced subjugation. "It was to the interest of both British and Americans", wrote James Landis in 1945, "that the political independence of Saudi Arabia should be assured".⁸⁰⁷

Given the strategic value of Saudi Arabia and the desire to keep Ibn Saud firmly within the Allied orbit, inter-allied cooperation in the Kingdom was the key theme of the Anglo-

⁸⁰⁵ NARA: RG 84 Stack Area 350 Row 67 Compartment 22 Shelf 1 Entry 3153 Saudi Arabia, U.S. Consulate Dhahran 1944-1945 000-886.7 Box 1. Dhahran to American Legation in Jidda and Cairo, Parker T. Hart, December 20, 1944.

⁸⁰⁶ Efraim Karsh, 'International Co-operation and Neutrality', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March, 1988) p. 57.

⁸⁰⁷ J.M. Landis, 'Anglo-American Co-Operation in the Middle East: Bi-national Cooperation is Significant if International Cooperation is our Aim'. Speech delivered before the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, April 13, 1945. *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. XI, pp. 428-432.

American relationship in the early years of the Second World War. The fact that scholars have tended to neglect this early period of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia in their analysis is one of the main shortcomings of the historiography of the subject. During 1941, Washington went on to support Britain's aim of maintaining its close relationship with Ibn Saud, viewing it as a buffer against Axis penetration in the Middle East as well as additional insurance against Axis designs on the American-owned oil concessions inside Saudi Arabia. By the same token, London realized the reciprocal benefits from enlisting the US Government's support in Saudi Arabian affairs. Financially, Riyadh at this juncture was in a precarious position as the government's main source of income, revenues drawn from the Hajj, had dwindled due to poor wartime travel conditions. From the vantage point of British policymakers, American provisions for financial aid and an agricultural mission to Saudi Arabia helped strengthen the al-Saud regime, further binding it to the Allied cause, while at the same time serving to bring the officially neutral United States closer to entering the war.

In conjunction to the strategic interdependence that was shaping Anglo-American relations, the Foreign Office and State Department both recognized that the best way to ensure that their policies would be successful in Saudi Arabia was to take no action that would be interpreted as threatening to the country's sovereignty. These interconnected paradigms continued to define the contours of the Anglo-American relationship in the Kingdom during 1942. In their efforts to protect Saudi Arabian oilfields and to gain air routes over the country, British and American officials were far from rivals. Keeping in mind the value of Saudi Arabia's "benevolent neutrality", the two allies rather found themselves sharing common ground in their efforts to deal with the intricate balancing act of increasing their co-involvement in the country without nullifying the country's independence in the process. Most importantly, the strategic interdependence at play in Saudi Arabia remained a driving force in the Anglo-American relationship. For example, the crucial backing of British diplomats in Jeddah convinced Ibn Saud to allow American war planners to acquire emergency air routes. This key episode clearly demonstrated to Washington the value of British influence in the Kingdom. Conversely, expanding Anglo-American cooperation had always been a wartime objective for London, and in the case of Saudi Arabia, it allowed British officials to have a say in the formulation of US policy.

Relations between Britain and the United States in Saudi Arabia can only be fully grasped when considered in a wider context. This is the reason why, unlike other studies, this thesis has delved into the question of Palestine during the war years. The failed attempt by the Allies to turn Ibn Saud into an arbiter for Palestine in 1943 did not damage the two powers' relations in Saudi Arabia. Instead, the episode confirmed the belief of the State Department and Foreign Office in the vital importance of preserving the King's political credibility as an independent Arab leader. Furthermore, one of the abiding lessons learned from the Hoskins Mission, a point which has been almost completely neglected by previous historians, is that it underscored just how interdependent British and American interests were, not only in Saudi Arabia, but in the entire Middle East.

From 1943 until the end of the war, however, there were ongoing debates between Britain and the United States, which sometimes became heated, over an array of issues such as oil, subsidies, and reforming the Kingdom's finances. These differences surfaced largely as a result of the United States Government's desire to play a greater role in Saudi affairs. Policymakers in Washington started to draw a link between the Kingdom's oil reserves and broader concerns of American national security. On the surface, the fact that the Americans had acquired oil concessions in the heart of *Pax Britannica* made it appear only natural that the topic of oil would be a lightning rod for allied antagonism. Yet, the question of oil and its impact must be placed in the broader context of the wartime politics of the Anglo-American alliance.

Firstly, it is worth noting that Saudi oil reserves had not yet acquired the political and economic significance in the 1940s, which they were to assume from the 1970s onwards. To give one example of this, shortly after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945, Paul Alling of the State Department wrote to Colonel William Eddy:

*"I have been wondering what long term effect the research work on the atomic bomb would have on our relations with Saudi Arabia and with all the Middle East. According to newspaper gossip the power of atomic energy can eventually be used for peacetime activities. In that case what becomes of the vast oil fields in the Middle East! One could speculate indefinitely on the results of this new discovery but if it is as important as everyone seems to be believe, the effect on the Near East may be profound".*⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁸ SML: William Eddy Papers. Box 8, Folder 27. Alling to Eddy, August 9, 1945.

Between 1941 and 1943, far from worrying about losing their oil concession to British interests, policymakers in Washington were far more concerned with ensuring that London would be responsible for the protection of Saudi Arabia against Axis incursions. Thereafter, the controversy over oil was largely manufactured by American officials who dealt with Saudi Arabia to protect themselves from charges of negligence in the unlikely event that ARAMCO's concession might fall into the hands of the British Government. Moreover, the subject of oil was not solely an Anglo-American contest. Greater competition took place within different branches of the US Government and the American oil industry. In terms of outcome, it was the immediate goal of assuaging tensions stemming from Saudi Arabian oil, which spurred the signing of the Anglo-American Oil Agreement in Washington DC in August 1944.

Both in the scholarly writing as well as in the popular imagination, the subject of British decline has been used as a means to interpret Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War. Britain, it is argued, was militarily overstretched, financially insolvent, worn out by war, and as such was no match for the juggernaut of American power. This circumstance was especially the case in a country like Saudi Arabia, which was outside of the British Empire. Finding itself in a weakened state, Britain thus bowed to the prospect of the United States gaining a greater foothold in Saudi Arabia as a means to indirectly guard its own interests in the Middle East, interests which the British Government no longer felt confident protecting alone. While there is a grain of truth in this depiction, a determinist paradigm portraying Britain as an inexorably weakened power in contrast to the rising power of the United States, is excessively simplistic and reductive. As clear as it may seem in hindsight that *Pax Britannica* would eventually be supplanted by a *Pax Americana*, this was by no means considered inevitable by British and American officials involved in the affairs of the Kingdom at the time.

Leaning on F. Scott Fitzgerald's adage in *The Great Gatsby* and seeing British policy as being "borne back ceaselessly into the past" ignores its dynamic qualities. One of the foremost historians of the wartime alliance, Christopher Thorne, has remarked that the equilibrium of Anglo-American relations ceased about the time of the Cairo Conference held in November 1943, when Britain "declined to junior status".⁸⁰⁹ However, the power structure of the wartime

⁸⁰⁹ Christopher Thorne, 'Indochina and Anglo-American Relations 1942-1945', *Pacific History Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Feb., 1976) p. 73.

alliance as a whole was not neatly replicated in the dynamics of British and American influence inside Saudi Arabia.

In fact, the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia may best be characterised as moving from infancy to puberty during the Second World War. As this characterisation implies, considerable uncertainty and insecurity remained with regard to Washington's influence despite the outward appearance of a dramatic expansion of American powers. Veiled beneath the spectacle and pomp of FDR's meeting with Ibn Saud in February 1945 at Great Bitter Lake, US policy in Saudi Arabia was described as uncertain and rudderless by some American officials. British policymakers had for more than forty years carefully crafted a mutually beneficial relationship with Ibn Saud which the Americans could not lightly dismiss. Time and again, American officialdom needed to rely on the diplomatic influence of their "British cousins" in order for the US to be heard in Saudi Arabia.

Between 1941 and 1945, London and Washington found it to be in their common interest to cooperate as much as possible. The times when British and American influence in Saudi Arabia did clash, the disparities were not the result of simple national rivalry. By autumn of 1944, it can be said that the two powers had come to an impasse over how they should channel their collaborative efforts in Saudi Arabia. Initially, British and American officials in equal measure recognized the fact that pushing ahead an activist agenda in the Kingdom carried the dangers of chipping away at the politically valuable image of Saudi Arabia's sovereignty. This is why projects such as the offering of Anglo-American financial subsidies, plans to build up infrastructure, and expanding military largesse in Saudi Arabia, had been largely restrained and carefully applied to dispel notions of nascent colonialism.⁸¹⁰ But compared to London, Washington had grown increasingly assertive in its approach to securing its interests in Saudi Arabia. Casting themselves as the "anti-colonial" power, American officials more often than not considered that their pro-active policies were "progressive" and liberal as opposed to reactionary and imperialist. Their thinking with regard to protecting the sovereignty of Saudi Arabia revolved around the question of what would become of the Kingdom if it was cut off from the "modernity" of the twentieth century. In the post-war world, would Riyadh's independence be secure in its present torpor if the wartime alliance did not intercede and aid the Saudis?

⁸¹⁰ See, Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East*, Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, 2004.

After a visit to Saudi Arabia, Archibald Roosevelt Jr., the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt, and an Army intelligence officer in the Second World War, described American activities in the Kingdom in boastful and celebratory terms:

*“We had waffles! To see what the Americans are doing in this hitherto forbidding land makes one very proud. It is perhaps the most exciting thing I’ve seen in the Middle East, about the only thing holding promise for a bright future”.*⁸¹¹

From the British perspective, however, officials in Jeddah, most notably Stanley Jordan, were unsure if Saudi Arabia was ready for this kind of “modernity”. Earlier policies that had once been constructed as an emergency measure, such as the prodigious subsidies that were offered to Ibn Saud, had now outlived their usefulness. They were no longer considered to be serving as an asset but were instead thought to encourage corruption amongst Saudi officials. The consequences of a pious Moslem Kingdom coming face to face with the realities of a materialistic United States with all of its excesses seemed uncertain and perilous to many British observers. More importantly, Britain which was more cash-strapped than ever by 1944 did not have the funds or the political will to equal Washington’s largesse-driven policies.

Certainly, many years of experience in the Middle East led Britain to believe that on the whole they were endowed with a certain amount of foresight, which the newly arrived Americans did not possess. From what they were witnessing in Saudi Arabia, British officials feared that the United States was at risk of pursuing a new form of American colonialism. News that Washington had further ambitious plans, including supplying Ibn Saud with a military mission and constructing an airfield in Dhahran were originally met with dismay by London. British officials saw the potential for these conspicuous projects to undermine the King’s rule. American military intrusions like these might also negatively impact Britain’s own regional prestige.

Yet in the end, London overlooked these concerns regarding US policy, hoping that the advantages of having the United States engaged in Saudi Arabia would outweigh any harm that might be done. Most notably, when American officials turned to their British colleagues and asked them to use their diplomatic influence to persuade Ibn Saud to accept the Dhahran airfield project, they acquiesced, knowing full well that in return an American base would add another

⁸¹¹ Library of Congress: Archibald Roosevelt Papers. Box 1, Diary, April 1945.

layer of protection to Britain's regional security. This is just one of many episodes in which initial discord in Saudi Arabia was to be ultimately resolved through Anglo-American cooperation with mutually beneficial outcomes for both parties.

As this thesis has demonstrated, one of the most enduring and underappreciated dynamics of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during this period is the degree to which strategic interdependence acted as a foundation upon which the two allies cemented their relationship. As Nigel Ashton has aptly put it, "the most noteworthy feature of the wartime relationship from 1941 to 1945 was the way in which differences in interests around the globe were largely overcome in the face of the unifying Axis threat".⁸¹² It is this wartime context that has been consistently neglected when it comes to the scholarship of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia. In an episode that deserves greater attention, the Stettinius Mission in the spring of 1944 pinpointed the over-arching cooperation shown by British and American officials in Saudi Arabia as a "test-case" on which to build a more solid inter-allied strategic partnership not limited to Saudi Arabia, but a partnership that could be implemented throughout the Middle East and survive the war. Indeed, there existed a strong belief that allies could fully integrate their respective policies in the Kingdom.

On a personal level, Clarence J. McIntosh, Vice-Consul of the American Legation from 1943-1945, recalled more than sixty years later that the British were "excellent and nice fellows", and that the rivalry "never seemed to come up" among the officials on the ground in Jeddah.⁸¹³ On a day-to-day basis, the Americans were invited to the British Legation to watch films with such titles as "*Desert Victory*" and "*Pimpernel Smith*" starring the archetypal Briton, Leslie Howard.⁸¹⁴ This human and social element played an important role in Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia throughout the war, a dimension stressed in this thesis that has been overlooked by most studies of the subject.

In particular, this study has highlighted the almost entirely overlooked personal interaction between the American quasi-official Karl Twitchell and officials from British Embassy in Washington in 1941. Their work and close collaboration helped to kick start Anglo-American cooperation in Saudi Arabia. Later, this was followed by the closely knit bond forged

⁸¹² Nigel Ashton, 'Anglo-American Relations from World War to Cold War' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan., 2004) p. 119.

⁸¹³ Phone interview with Clarence McIntosh, January 30, 2006.

⁸¹⁴ Georgetown University, Lauinger Library (LL): Clarence McIntosh Papers. Box 1, Folder 16, May 29, 1943.

between the British minister Hugh-Stonehewer-Bird and the American minister James Moose in 1942 and 1943, which proved to be another key building block in constructing the Anglo-American partnership in the Kingdom. In fact, it was precisely these cases of personal amity advancing Anglo-American interests that led policymakers in London and Washington to assume that compatibility amongst British and American officials in Jeddah could ease any possible political or strategic differences.

This is why, when diplomatic communication between the allies in Saudi Arabia faltered in the spring of 1944, as the need for inter-allied harmony grew ever more essential, key officials from both sides of the Atlantic took stock and concluded that the problems derived from “lack of liaison” between officials on the ground. The importance of this episode for Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia has not been fully accounted for by historians. What it shows is that American and British officialdom were not inclined to believe that their countries’ interests in Saudi Arabia were irreconcilable. Instead, Edward Stettinius and Lord Halifax boldly suggested that each nation should remove their ministers in the service of reconstituting sound Anglo-American relations. This is an example that speaks to the willingness of the two allies to build and maintain a workable alliance whatever the local difficulties this may occasionally have presented in the Kingdom.

To underscore this point, when early signs of the approaching Cold War began to appear in 1945, the interplay of common British and American interests over Saudi Arabia was highlighted once again. With the vociferous support of Ibn Saud, British views of Saudi Arabia took on a Cold War complexion at a very early stage, which might be seen as an extension of the Anglo-Russian rivalry dating back to the eighteenth century. London most certainly had no desire for Washington to retreat back into a non-interventionist Fortress America strategy. Retaining the United States’ engagement in Saudi Arabia had now come to be viewed as an important bulwark against Moscow’s potential designs on Britain’s informal Middle Eastern empire. Some Americans in Saudi Arabia, led notably by William Eddy, were however not so willing to play a supportive role in Britain’s “Great Game”. Nonetheless, as Soviet expansionist tendencies came into full view in neighbouring Iran, American policymakers took comfort in Britain’s entrenched position in the region.

Donald Cameron Watt once noted that, “the distinguishing mark of the international historian is a bias toward the studies of crises”.⁸¹⁵ This thesis has analysed the development of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia without such a predisposition and has thus made a distinctive contribution to the subject’s historiography. Those historians who have stressed disproportionately polarization have not sufficiently answered two fundamental questions. While Britain and the United States were not always aligned in their policies *vis a vis* Saudi Arabia, the question as to why the two powers continued to pursue the objective of partnership remains unexplained. The logical follow-up question is what this pattern of resilience infers about the nature of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia during the Second World War. Thus far, these questions have been left unaddressed as historians have tended to focus too much on often conflictual processes in Anglo-American relations at the expense of cooperative outcomes.

This thesis has sought to address these hitherto unanswered questions. Challenging those interpretations whose advocates have generally overemphasized the conflictual features of Anglo-American relations in Saudi Arabia, this thesis has accounted for the reasons why the cooperative nature of the relationship deserves fuller attention. During the period 1941-45, the forging of a lasting, integrated Anglo-American partnership in Saudi Arabia fell short of the high expectations of both Britain and the United States. Nevertheless, the determination with which the allies strove to keep the partnership intact is a testament to its essential, multifaceted and ultimately cooperative nature. Driven by their common goal of an Allied victory, British and American interests in Saudi Arabia were interdependent. The keynote of their relationship was the pursuit for cooperation. Writing in 1945, James Landis, an official with great experience when it came to Anglo-American relations in the Middle East, observed that “the ultimate test of co-operation must always be that it pays both parties spiritually and materially to work together rather than apart”.⁸¹⁶ With Landis’s words in mind, the Anglo-American relationship in Saudi Arabia between the years of 1941 and 1945 ultimately passed such a test.

⁸¹⁵ See, Robert M. Hathaway, *Great Britain & the United States: Special Relations since World War II* (United States: Twayne Publishing, 1990).

⁸¹⁶ J.M. Landis, ‘Anglo-American Co-Operation in the Middle East’. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 240, ‘Our Muddled World’ (July, 1945) p. 70.

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